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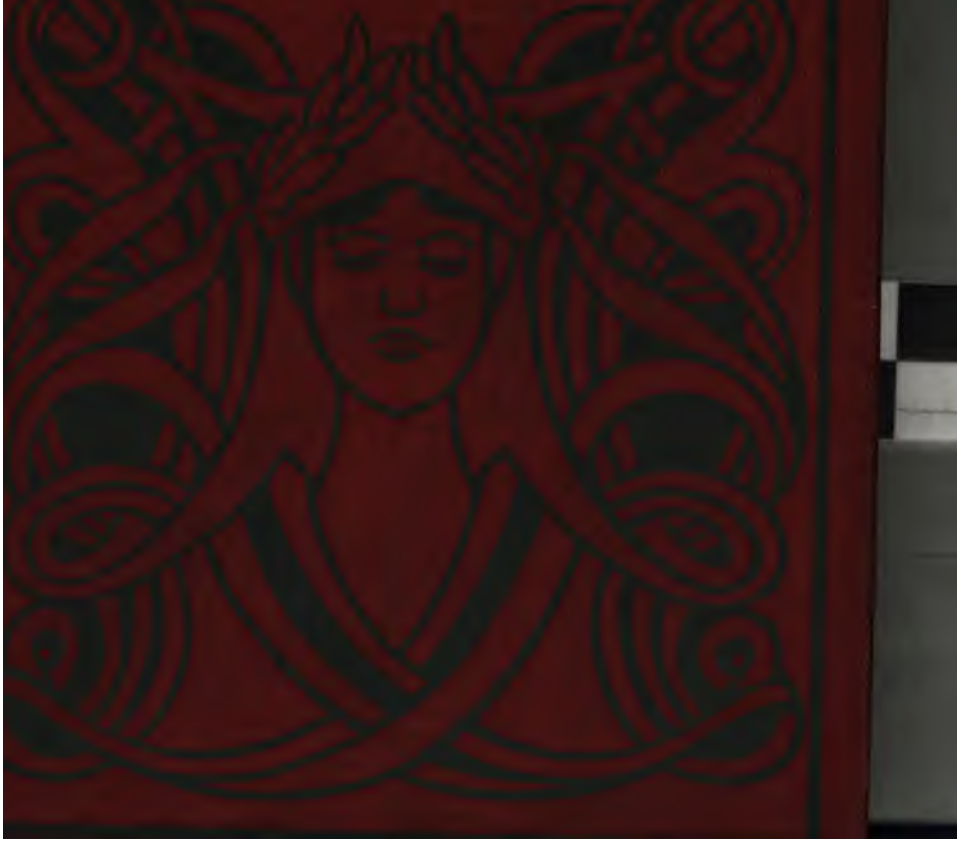
The TREE OF KNOWLEDGE



1. Fiction, English

NCW

Tree

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

A DOCUMENT BY

A WOMAN

NEW YORK
THE STUYVESANT PRESS
1908

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PREFACE

THERE could be no excuse for giving to the world this pitiful diary of disillusion and despair but the fact that it is a record of actual experience.

Both the professed critic and the amateur of letters will recognise that no one could have written so vivid a log of a shipwrecked life but the woman who had lived it. No one but Marie Bashkirtseff could have given us the famous "Journal." Here we have a self-revelation even more valuable to the psychologist. Marie Bashkirtseff's existence was a series of poses. She posed to herself even more than to others. The unhappy woman who dissected her soul in these vibrant pages was, so far as can be judged, entirely frank.

This is not their only merit, for her delight in the colour and flexibility of language lends them an exotic charm which, like the scent of orchids, fatigues and delights the sense at the same time; but it certainly is their chief merit. Here we have set naked before us the nature of a woman steeped in the poisonous juices that distil from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. She was abnormal, a deca-

dent, a "sport," even. Yet she represented only the extreme of a type of women which the conditions of the age tend to produce. Her motto was the motto of Magda, *Io sono io;* her desires, Pleasure and Experience, if possible, combined. Seeing that she had no standards of right and wrong, it would be inaccurate to call her immoral. She was literally non-moral. Morality was to her but a convention; Religion, merely a frame of mind.

Her diary is "not for little people nor for fools." It is a document to be studied with scientific curiosity by those whose interest lies in sounding the hidden depths of human character. Women will understand the writer best—those, at any rate, who understand themselves. These will judge her less harshly than men.

I knew little more of her than can be learnt by any reader of the book. I saw her but once. She was disquietingly beautiful, and talked much as she wrote—with startling felicities of expression and even more startling discords. She believed the world treated her badly. She did not see that we all receive from life just what we bring it. If you are wiser, pity her. May she rest in peace! F. H.

FIRST PART

DRESDEN.

The Tree of Knowledge

DRESDEN

February.—To-morrow I am going to Gericke. I have given my beauty and my blood to this art, to its terror, its rapture, its despair. I have given my humanity: more I cannot give. If it will not make the return of one imperishable harmony, I must strike fire from life in other ways. The darkness is near us all, the nothingness, the unspeakable Woe. But here is, in the meantime, a world of golden light and white winds and my youth—my youth which must be fed of all things precious, here and from the ends of the earth. To-morrow I am going to Gericke. He has all my MSS., all the music wrung from

my dreams—the score for the Maeterlinck plays, the Heine sequence, the setting for the Whitman Song of Death. And Gericke will not spare me the truth—whatever it be. . . .

To-day, in the garden by the river, a faint and delicate wafture of Spring floated in the air; a gorgeous sun set over the pinnacles of the ancient city and a single, black swallow wheeled in the evening sky. I let Egon hold my hand. He looked delightful in his uniform—boyish and yet dignified. He took off his helmet for a moment and the wind touched his silken, yellow hair like the hair of a child. He took it into his head that I was thinking of him and said so. I laughed.

"There are so many other things, Lieutenant von Helmuth."

Poor boy! Tears came into his earnest, German eyes.

"I thought you cared. . . ."

That was too much at an hour when the grey Fates were weaving so gravely at my thread of life. Suppose Gericke says: "Very clever, very good for a woman, but it can't live!"

I turned on my gold and white youth.

"Care? And become Frau Lieutenant von Helmuth in a garrison on the Russian frontier? I must have life, *lieber Junge,* complete life. I must know every splendour—the flashing of jewels and the glint of marble, music and the fragrance of infinite flowers, the enamelled brilliance of perfect day and nights of the fulfilment of all desire. Unless . . ."

"Unless?" he echoed.

"Nothing!" I said, sharply. "Go home and study the art of war and think of your little cousin in Magdeburg. She will help to continue the von Helmuth race—competently."

He went off with steps that dragged a

little. But what is one to do? If I loved him I should put a thousand miles between us. I cannot afford to love Egon. Art has taught me the secrets of the passions in storm or in tense quietude more than life, by which I am unsullied, could have done. It gives me a vision of an amber strand under an infinitely blue sky and the white surges thundering at my feet. There Egon should bare his head and the wind should play with his silken, childlike hair; he should put his arms around me—his white, strong, cool arms. . . . And at the end of a few weeks I should awake, having given away my one pearl beyond price (if Art should fail), and be as far as now from the visible glory of life. If Art should *not* fail, I may yet go to that glittering shore and play with bright shells and let Egon kiss my eyes that the sun has dazzled. . . . Otherwise a battle, not of caresses, awaits

me. I have no money and I need all in my life that money can buy. A heartless cosmic process flings me upon this pitiful, brief shore of life, gives me a passion for all visible glory and delight, a passion strong as the storm and as merciless to others and myself. The Tables of the Law are broken: the Gods are dead. Why should I hesitate to build my Visionary Palace which is also the Palace of Life? It must have pillars of jade and lapis-lazuli; golden sphinxes with topaz eyes; the looms of the ancient East must cover its shining floor. Slaves upon bended knees must bring me the fruits of the earth and I must cast the priceless, jewelled goblets into the blue sea that lies below. The Visionary Palace costs money, and the Tablets of the Law are broken, the Gods are dead.

Gericke looked at me with his cold, pas-

sionless eyes. I have never seen fire in those eyes except when he conducts: during the *Vorspiel* to Parsifal they smoulder, during the *Liebestod* they flare. To-day they were as dull as two smooth pebbles abraded by the currents of geologic ages. He looked at me for a long time in silence, so long that my breath threatened to give out. Then his heavy lips moved.

"*Also,* you wish to know . . ."

"What the work is worth, not from any two-penny point of view. Don't tell me it's earnest, commendable, talented. I cannot afford to give my life for anything less than immortality."

He threw back his great, ugly head and laughed for the first time in my experience —a brutal and elemental laugh. I got up and felt a curious chill creep, snake-like, up my spine.

"I have my answer . . ." I said weakly.

His laughter yielded to a grey, weary smile as he leaned forward.

"Sit down," he commanded sharply. "Your work is—earnest—commendable—talented." He rasped out the words in hard, staccato fashion. "You have worked—admirably, with a whole heart. Any other pupil of mine would give years of life for such words from me."

I shrugged my shoulders, but the knife was going into my marrow.

"What is the use of talking, Herr Professor? You have pronounced judgment upon me."

He leaned closer to me until his head nearly touched mine; the dull, greyish eyes seemed to weigh upon my heart.

"I am fifty," he said slowly. "I have worked all my life like a galley-slave. My works—*du lieber Gott*—they won't live. Nobody knows it better than I. But if the thing were to do over again, I'd do the

same. *That* is love for one's art. As for you, your dirty egotism would rot your genius if you had it."

"But I haven't."

"No. . . "

All that happened no longer ago than this morning, and yet the thing seems incredibly distant—ages and lives away. I know now what agony is, a personal, human agony that belongs to me—not the despair of Isolde transfigured in those waves of delirious harmony, not the sadness, intolerably exquisite and poignant, of Mélisande, but a grey, corroding agony lived through by the light of my familiar lamp. I must kill it, throttle it, I must not let it lay its hand upon me and carve its marks upon my face. There is still life, life. . . .

This afternoon when the sun was at its height and streamed into my windows I let down the velvet curtains and my

chamber lay in a soft gloom. I lit two candles on my dressing-table and then tossed my garments one by one upon the bed. The long mirror reflected the tall, white, perfect image against a background of the silken waves of dark hair. I saw a more triumphant loveliness than dwells in any music I could have dreamed or written. I saw that for which men from of old have battled against tall towers and citadels, for which they have crushed the bones of the ancient Earth, their mother, for which they have striven and despaired and died. That which could burn the "topless towers of Ilion" can conquer for me a few glittering years, can break for me the barriers of a perverse and bourgeois society, can keep me from its judgment and its penalties. . . The agony weakens, the dreams of art fade. I have dwelt under the skies of Veronese and have laughed with fauns and satyrs in

Boecklin's cypress islands. The symphonies of Brahms have loved me, the passion of Schumann has clamoured in my blood. I have walked upon aërial heights with Zarathustra, and shuddered with Aglavaine and Tintagiles upon the marge of leaden meres and windless forests. All that is over. I shall give a banquet in memory of my Ambitions and my Brains. I must fasten myself upon life and draw from it the breath of its uttermost ecstasy, and I must pay no price. For Art I have paid this agony and the memory of it will make me warier forever. I have made my choice. To-morrow I shall go over the old ground once more. Then, as my drastic Germans say: *"Schwamm drüber!"*

As soon as Egon received the invitation to my banquet, he came. I lay on the *chaise-longue* and watched him with cold

interest now, the choice being made. His face was curiously white; the skin about his eyes was drawn; his movements were quiveringly nervous; his language had that precision which I have noticed in other high-bred Germans under an emotional stress. He looked straight at me.

"I will lay down my commission. I am an engineer and could command a position the—ah—emoluments of which would be considerable."

"And wouldn't all the dead von Helmuths turn in their graves?"

The blood surged into my little soldier's face.

"I will forget even that—for you."

I let the sleeve of my silk dressing-gown slip from my shoulder.

"Your sacrifice would be quite wasted."

"Perhaps not entirely," he replied with a pained frown. "You will forgive me for saying that I seem to discern in you

possibilities that are terrible, possibilities from which my whole being recoils. No price would be too great to save you from these, to turn you safely into the haven of my love."

I wouldn't have credited my little lieutenant with so fine a perception.

"And those possibilities are?" I asked softly.

He turned, if possible, a trifle whiter.

"Since we understand each other, what is the use of going into disagreeable details? I am ready to give up for your sake my career, my family, my whole life."

I felt brutal because life had hurt me recently and I answered:

"It's not enough."

"Is that your last word?"

"My last word."

He got up, bowed low, clicked his heels together in military fashion and started to walk toward the door.

"Egon," I called.

He turned.

"Gnädiges Fräulein befehlen?"

"Will you not say good-bye?"

He hesitated, crimsoned and turned back. He bent down on one knee beside me and kissed my hand. Then he sprang up and went without a word.

So I have made a second choice. In the eyes of the world a very foolish one, no doubt. Did I make the choice after all, I who sit here? Was it not made for me? One does what one can. I was in the blind, dumb slime that quivered into life far back in the elemental ages upon that one miraculous day in Eternity; I was in the ungainly dragons of the primæval mud; I was in the tooth and claw, the loin and lip of the caveman, and in a thousand thousand of my ancestors thereafter. I was inherent in all these. Through all these the monstrous universe shaped me to

the being that I am, the being who made this choice, the being who (to descend from the cosmic to the parochial) could not be Frau Egon von Helmuth, a pillar of the Prussian aristocracy on twenty thousand marks a year, a brewer of coffee, a darner of socks, a mother of blond babies. After the storms of music, after the surging waves of all emotion, I must have more than that. Beethoven has fortified my soul, Wagner has sharpened my subtlest nerves, Tschaikovsky has taught me a yearning wistfulness for all fragile and exquisite things under the stars. My beautiful, dear desires clamour for fulfilment, if indeed the world hold the joy and glamour of their quest. The stupid laws of stupid people must be burned away. My one law is—not to be found out, not to sacrifice one perfect golden dream of flesh or marble, one great action or passion in the supreme Art of Life, one purple

hour of liquid stars and yearning winds, one sigh, one word, one gesture, to the decrepit mandates of the emasculate. . .

I search my soul in vain for any sign of fear, any presentiment of defeat. Rather do I feel an exhilaration as of new wine. My heart burns with the presages of triumph after triumph. I have a vision of myself shod in sandals of silver no whiter than my feet, folded in veils of silk set with the pearls of half an Orient, holding in the leash of my loveliness the power and wisdom of the earth.

I had them all down at the Hôtel Bellevue to dinner last night. Gericke didn't come, nor did Egon. I was rather glad not to have the boy's emotional death's head at my feast. Those who came were merry, and later—moved. Otto Saar made quite an affecting speech on the loss sustained by the art of music through my

abandonment of it. Heigho! We had champagne and roses and at two in the morning the girls became indiscreet. Little Thérèse danced on the table with gold bracelets around her tiny ankles, and when the laughter trailed off some imbecile grew pathetic and sang in a high, half-sobbing tenor voice, *"Stell auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,"* sang it to the bitter end and broke down at the nerve-grinding pathos of the closing words: *"Wie einst im Mai."*

Then they went and they were all so tipsy that they didn't notice my staying behind at the last moment. But I wanted to see the hall with the lights still bright and the glasses overturned and the innumerable soiled petals, like drops of blood, on the table and the chairs and the floor. My God, it was ghastly! The broken meats were noisome, the blue cigarette smoke had a stale, acrid stench.

The ghost of pleasure was more joyless and hideous than any sorrow could have been. It taught me how I shall have to fight for the joy of life in a world dedicated by its very nature to sorrow.

The night air cooled these clumsy, sentimental fancies from my brain and I slept well. This morning I burned letters and useless manuscripts and lounged about, thinking quite calmly and prosaically of the future. I have lived with genius at the culminating points of the race's passion and imagination. The mean scope of the individual life will scarcely offer anything comparable. The world will have to be very amusing to rival the grotesques of Casanova or the *Contes Drolatiques* of Balzac, the revelry of the *Arabian Nights* or the horrors of de Saad. No; my mind won't be surprised, nor my senses. Are prepares us to expect a rapture of which reality is probably

quite innocent. I know nothing yet as a personal experience, but I don't believe that love at its lowest or highest terms is the consuming ecstasy that Swinburne writes about. So that with a mind learned in all the intricacies of the world's adventure and vice, I am not likely to be either shocked or disappointed. I start free of all prejudices, stript of the tawdriness of all time-honoured lies. Not the virtuous, not the faithful, not the tenders of the altar-fires of any propitiatory fetishism have encompassed the splendours of my desire, or have lived in literature or made history. Theodora dancing in the circus, Cleopatra slaying the slaves who had satiated her lust, Guinevere and Isolde branding their lords with shame, Messalina in the sailors' tavern, Herodias of the Seven Deadly Veils, Lucretia Borgia and the Pompadour, the lyric secrets of intolerable desire that lurk in the eyes of the

Gioconda of Leonardo—these are the names and fates with which the world still rings.

(And, after all, fidelity is not a human, not a civilised virtue upon any terms.) It is an exact contradiction to the whole civilising process that makes for mental and sensory complexity, for change and multiplication of interest. Unlike the senses of doves, canary birds and donkeys, our senses are inextricably blended with our nerves and our brains. A thousand subtle influences bind or estrange us. A light, a memory, a perfume, a fold of drapery, a passage of verse—these influences in the human process of sexual selection tend to a variety of which the mere body is ignorant, but which is the very condition of the soul's life.

I start free of another drag. My heart is not very tender and it would be hard for me to be hurt through any human re-

lationship. I shall not give my soul away; I shall not suffer through compassion; I am not made, in truth, to be unhappy or sorrowful. My mind and body cry out at pain, but when the pain is over there are no lees of regret or wistfulness in my heart. Only my Art. . . But that is at an end.

After I had taken my books back this afternoon to the Royal Library for the last time, I sat for a while on the stone seat in the garden. The river was a ring of jade, the green-tinted Cathedral and Palace wavered in the misty air on the opposite bank. I had sat there so often snatching a moment to watch the tremours of colour before I returned to the excitement of sound. But now I am done with the starved question of music, the music's craving to understand, the exhausting, empty answer. And, after all, we are human; we have lips and hands. That rap-

ture of excitement may transcend but cannot forever replace the earthlier joys on which our nerves insist. That crying of our hearts and of our senses which is the substance of art—shall not life quiet it?

Yet I am lonely to leave them, these monsters and wind and sea deliriums! Could anything adequate follow this furious overture, this yearning of Titans through the thunder and boom of symphonies?

LONDON

June.—In order to strike the keynote of the life that I must live I am squandering what money I have on a setting worthy of me. My letters of introduction placed me at once. As for the future—it must make terms with me. I can buy a few months of magnificence; the world must give me the rest.

The pomp and historic dignity of the picture here enchant me who am, in this passion for our ancestral splendours, a true Colonial. The scent of English flowers has always brooded in my blood: I recognised it at once. The Palace of Westminster completes my dream, but offers no

new vision. Against that background of sonorous arches stands Oscar Elliott. Day before yesterday he met me in the Park. The white hawthorn was in bloom, the elms seemed to stand at the rosy edge of the world. Oscar Elliott is an M. P., impassive, dark, subtle. But yesterday he looked troubled. Something had shaken that slightly imperial calm.

"It is useless to deny," he said, "that I came here in the hope of meeting you."

Just then his wife passed swiftly in her victoria, and my frank gentleman's face grew even more perturbed. He began to talk about Jane Austen. . . . I asked him to button my long glove. The tips of his fingers burned on the silken skin of my arm. I asked him whether he had a fever. Then he laughed.

"You witch!"

"I don't see how I deserve that epithet," I answered simply.

He looked at me keenly from under that ivory forehead of his.

"I am going to pay you a serious compliment," he said. "You have in you the 'daemonic' element of which Goethe speaks. I am not accustomed to being drawn out of my orbit. . . . And now . . . I am going to be at the Savoy to-morrow evening."

"How did you know?"

"Because I must know." His voice had a ring of finality, almost of sternness. "You understand," he went on, "that I don't love in the ordinary romantic, sentimental way. But I feel that you are necessary to me. Therefore, I must possess you."

I laughed ironically and then said without a tinge of colour in my voice:

"And the lady in the victoria?"

"*Is* the lady in the victoria, at the head of the table, on the Committees of the

Charity Bazaars—no more. Are you coming to the House to-morrow morning?"

"Perhaps."

He crushed my fingers in his hand.

"Are you coming?"

"Perhaps. . ."

I went. The attendant asked me to write on a card the object of my visit. I wonder what he would have said had I written the truth. Oscar and I walked through the solemn corridors dimly illuminated by the windows of stained glass. He was taciturn and his lips were slightly compressed. He opened strange, old books almost at random and showed them to me. Outside the birds were murmuring. Petals from the red roses at my breast fell strangely upon Oscar Elliott's hands. At six o'clock the chimes beat out their immemorial harmony through the suave evening air. . . . We stepped out into a sunset world; we walked in

silence, but I heard the moaning of his blood; I saw the trembling of his hands; I saw the broken pride of his strength.

"To-night?" he said, and his voice choked.

"Oh, at the Savoy," I answered lightly, "perhaps."

He is strong and fine at once; and, since I am done with austerity and restraint it is well to know that he could give me orchids and pomegranates and myrrh; marble and diamond and chrysoprase; that he can set the bare melody of life to a rich and subtle orchestration. . . . He doesn't excite me personally, but I don't want to be excited. I want my life to be a garden full of gorgeous flowers having the peal of bells. I want to walk there and see the terrible loveliness and hear the strange vibrations. . . .

June 3.—We dined at the Savoy last

evening. At first everything enchanted me in this beautiful, fragile, wholly and adorably artificial world. Beneath us trembled the lights that bind the river and splash the gloom of the water with pallor. Afar, as in another world, we heard the roar and boom of the city. But we were here, deliciously isolated from all grind and vulgarity. The coarseness and brutality of Nature were excluded here; this was a refuge and a Paradise of Man. All my civilised, all my sophisticated instincts, drank in the atmosphere and the glamour greedily. White lights and gold; hot-house roses; strange, delicate foods and the glitter of precious vintages, how they satisfy with their fair allurements my subtler senses.

Oscar Elliott was to come, but he was detained at the House. The message seemed to darken the lights, to make the food like earth, the wine like hyssop. I

felt my face shrink and the lines grow under my eyes; my very breasts fell; I had to tighten the lace over them. I felt like a pricked soap-bubble. My God, do I love him? Have I sold my freedom so early to an alien strength? No! But a grey fear crept into my heart that he was breaking the bonds of his own desire. . . . Then, in a week, I saw myself in the Inferno of Bloomsbury, awakened by a scullery maid with a tallow dip. I saw myself giving music lessons at three shillings, or in the end . . .

Just as the pallid dawn threatened to quench the light of our artificial loveliness, just as the babble about me became unendurable—he came. Heavens! The emotion is so execrably old and hackneyed. *Vieux jeu* like all the rest. But it came upon me with a freshness as of the winds of Spring, white and jubilant from space. He didn't speak to me, he chatted with

the others. But the flames of his two eyes were upon my eyes, my lips, my arms, my bosom—those consuming flames. He avoided even the brushing of my skirts against him as if the intolerably poignant touch would cause some catastrophe. At the door of the carriage he held out his hand dumbly, like a beggar, and I dropped into it one red rose.

June 10.—It has come, the cataclysmic moment for which I have kept my lips pure and my hands unsullied. I am disappointed, shocked, bored. . . .

We were all at the Sayces, for the week-end. Their balconies and terraces and their Italian garden are like a picture—blue and gold and purple—a picture of the Renaissance. The tall poplars seemed spangled with the stars; the white statues glimmered in the thickets, immemorial dreams in their unseeing eyes.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

The lake sleeps so terribly still that the image of the moon lies in it like a silver cup. We had danced until a madness seemed to impel our feet, until we seemed moved by an external power through the mazes of an immortal dance. The night was warm and Oscar Elliott took me out upon the terrace. The winds were dead. I looked at him and saw that he was pale. Something in me yearned toward the cooler greenery of the garden, and we walked slowly among the poplars, the beautiful trees of the night. It was all dreamlike—a picture from an Italian madrigal. We came upon a statue of Hermes and Oscar leaned his forehead against the cool marble, and all about us was silent. I stood beside him when, suddenly, a nightingale began to sing so wildly, so passionately, with such a terrible insistence as though the mighty pulsations of sound must burst its little

throat. Oscar looked up. He came so near me that his eyes seemed to melt into mine.

"Our doom is upon us," he said in a voice shaken by strange sobs, as the trees are shaken by the winds, "our doom is upon us."

We walked swiftly to an arbour and I sank upon a bench of marble. He took my hand.

"Let me touch you."

I drew away, but he forced me toward him.

"Let me touch you," he gasped, "your flesh is so white. . . ."

His fingers sank into my arm, and my body, as he held me beside him, seemed to match his, muscle by muscle, like the grooves of a puzzle. He pressed back my head as if to cut my throat and mangled my lips under his. A cold fever shook me with monstrous tremours. I trembled like

grass and my teeth chattered in my head. . . .

Then we heard voices, soft and distant yet. He released me and we sat beside each other movelessly as stones. By the faint glimmer of the light I saw the pebbles upon the path at our feet and I tried, hazily, to count them. But I lost my count again and again. After a while I heard his voice sounding abruptly.

"Come."

We went back into the glitter of many lights among the crowd of faces, but all these persons seemed small and strange and irrelevant. . . .

That night I slipped into the cooling waters of a bath. I put handfuls of lavender into it, lavender with its clean, pure odour. I looked upon the whiteness of my body, for it seemed to me that his touch must have left wounds upon it—the indelible stigmata of his terrible passion.

But I found nothing save a blue spot on my left arm. I was glad to lie between the cool sheets of my bed and to feel them against my burning body.

And this was the climax of being young, the climax of love—this brutal trick of Nature's to insure population, this tremour of ice-flame madness. I have lost Oscar Elliott and found, in his place, that eternal beast—Man. What is the use of loving any one if passion transforms him and my washerwoman's "bloke" into the identical animal with the identical ruthless appetites; if all the artificial beauty of life cracks at one blow of that eternal hammer; if the same mechanical gibber of instinct has made apes and then man and builds its universe continually anew out of the dust of perished kisses? But we are helpless under the yoke of creation. The romance is dead, the delicate pose shattered, the love fled. And yet . . . and

yet . . . were he to stretch out his hand again my flesh would hasten to the stroke. But I don't want to do that. For a space, at least, I want my beautiful illusion, my delicate pantomime. I want to pose with my fairylike frocks and the June nights and the Terrace of the House of Commons as a background. I wanted this man, so much older, so grave and so noted, to break through all laws for me and say: "I love you." It is too early for the rest. I will not become the instrument of the reproductive impulse until I have lived long enough in my strange garden of the sonant flowers.

He came as soon as he could after our return to town. He was again strong, smooth, immaculate. But I remembered the sensual mask that had been his face that night under the poplars and I shuddered. He saw the change in me at once.

"I see you have repented of the other night. You wish it to end then?"

The words struck a cold flame from me.

"Repent? Do you think I am one of the fools who do what they never intended, who let life betray them? I do a thing because it is a part of myself, because it is inconceivable that, given the circumstances, it could touch my temperament in any other way. I can no more repent of my deliberate acts than I could repent of my height or the shape of my mouth."

"In that case I do not understand."

Then I spoke slowly.

"I expected to find the smile of a god, not the grin of a satyr."

He rested his chin on his hand and looked at me with an old, old smile.

"Dear child, you might as well try to escape the sun as the clutches of the satyr. You will be so tame under his touch—so soon. But I will tell you for your con-

solation that he, even he, is one of the servants of the divine Eros, whose face you may one day see."

"I am going away," I said coldly, but he was not to be put off.

"Do you think that you love me?"

"I like you to kiss me," I answered, and my voice was now clear and steady. "But why can't you—be gentle about it, and just imagine for the moment that you are engaged to be married to me?"

He laughed a rich, sonorous, sensual laugh.

"If I imagined—that, if I imagined myself engaged to be married to you—I would think of the time when I would be . . ."

God! Why did he say that?

I turned my back to him and his voice came to me from behind, stern, compelling and yet—sweet.

"You may go away, but I think that you

will come back. You cannot forget my kisses in the garden, for they awakened you to life. And if you are far away and hungry for my kisses, hungry for the clutch of the undying satyr—send for me and I will come."

I hate him, for it is possible that he speaks the execrable truth. But he wrongs the woman that I really am, the woman who can die but who cannot be compelled.

And now? Well, I have invested my few pounds in judicious luxury. People are glad to have me. I think I shall accept one of my many invitations. I think I shall go to the pearl-grey sky, the pale-green sea, the austere mountains of the North. After that flame of passion has so seared me, I shall step into a symphony of pallid shades and elemental sounds. I shall dip my wrists in the cool waves of the unimpassioned seas; I shall watch the

flight of the desolate sea-gulls over the icy waters. I shall go to regions where Nature, eternally virginal, sleeps under an enduring veil of snow.

CHRISTIANIA

THE Dunnes' yacht *Pythia.*

August.—I have got back to the fairy-tale. The facts of life, the meaning of words, no longer touch me. I was in another universe, another life, amidst another humanity. Now I am empty-hearted, glad, sunfilled.

I would like to sculpture this moment—the broad noon, the emerald sea, the pale sky. Everything is crystalline, young, unmoved. The silence of the winter has hardly left it; it is August; yet the woods are coloured under foot with buds and delicate leaves that come with spring. The wind is vibrant with the smell of pine trees, and one hears the ceaseless music of forests.

Christiania looks grey and indifferent at the edge of the fjord. It seems jaded against this supernal freshness of nature.

I did not want to go into the town nor to go again near any place where mankind lived. The phrases of their episodes are nothing any longer except as values for art criticism; passion is the nervous effect of augmented ninths, and voluptuousness an expression that was made for the emotion of colour.

The people on the yacht are adjuncts, furniture, creatures whose existence makes possible the routine of food and sleep and this luxury of travel, this theft of beautiful things out of life. For if that indecent exposure of circumstance which is called truth should take place I would not be here. I have no money, and people without money are not popular members of civilised communities. As a matter of fact, in a couple of months I shall have

made myself a pauper—just as much a pauper as the unimaginative beings who inhabit workhouses. For, of course, if they had any imagination, any trace of temperament, any redeeming sign of the attributes which we flatter ourselves distinguish us from brutes, they would be thieves or courtesans.

But for the meantime I have Doucet frocks, and I drink out of Sèvres tea-cups.

At the back of my mind somewhere I enjoy the prospect of danger. I am glad to have poured all my chance of safe life into the lap of Fate. It is on the knees of the gods. That's the charm of it; it will be a play between the gods and me.

I was determined that when I *did* go on shore I would go alone. People deaden me if I am not making a mental play out of them; then the surroundings are only scenery for the stage of the idea.

Human beings devour my vitality, muti-

late my moods, get between myself and the picture of the moment, as smoke gets in front of a camera. Their nearness mauls off the bloom of any beauty, and is to me like rough hands fingering grapes.

Even Jim Blake is merely a male tint for the effect of moonlight. I find him very useful on the yacht for the sex illustration of crepuscular effects; then his six feet two, his Irish accent, his eagerness to paint scenery by instinct, are as useful as plates at dinner. He is superfluous, however, in the emotion of places or Art.

So I took my senses in my hand and went to the Viking Ships. I sat down in front of them, and asked them what they were going to make me feel.

But I hate old things—they drown us in the depths of our little years. For, after all, there is so little originality in anything we know of our existence. Even the sea pants and rages in its early manner. I

can't imagine how it gets up enough energy, now, to generate a storm.

And life with us is still the same, automatic expression of an instinct that we certainly ought to have considerably amplified when we shed our tails. A few daring souls may decorate the world in the form of cannibals, but really novel methods of using the forces which we share with all creation, from an earthworm up, are practically non-existent.

I want, you want, they want; I love, you love, they love. To be held in the declension of a verb! Shade of Spencer! is there nothing personal in being human?

I am sick of sharing in the enlightenment of a jelly-fish, and I don't care about being a superior protoplasm. I want to be I, myself, with a whole set of original instincts for my exclusive use.

When I left the ships, to go to the little picture-gallery, they were selling red roses

on the quay—a blur of blood against the grey of the palace.

The red roses made my cheeks go white. It is yet August, and the birds are still whimpering among the stones of Palace Yard. It was so far away; it was over; my heart became hollow in the sunlight. I had touched life for a moment: what were the fjord and the trees worth beside that? They were an imitation world.

But I went doggedly on, to see the painted emotion I had promised myself. It is, after all, familiar to me to forget that I am flesh and blood.

The walls at first only opened out to fresh seas, and distant skies and wind, the invariable blue and white and sun of the Northern men. I looked at them vacantly; the dusty red velvet seats were not very comfortable; the sun pressed hard on the linen blind that bulged down from the glass ceiling. A shaft of sun in front of

me tremoured with a myriad glittering mites of dust. Everything was mordant and hushed, youth was dead—stillborn. I could never get back those mysterious, London days, that seemed to veil some ecstasy ready to come on the world.

I went dully on to the next room, and there waited for me—to brand me, to mock me, to mark me as a coward—the Sinding "Humanity"; its abandonment, the sense of the ultimate embrace. My life was dust before it. All I had to make up for this were some phrases of Rossetti I had read, some moments of Strauss I had listened to, and what beside? What beside?—some memory of perfume of hawthorn blossoms, some smothered murmuring of birds, and afterwards—I forced my memory to it—those words! The place faded behind my tears. It needs not all the surrender of the "Humanity" to burn up the universe in everybody's final fire.

STOCKHOLM

Tuesday.—The sun has netted the water in gold this morning. Every breath is an impetus—I don't know to what, but as long as it is an impetus, it is enough. I have the whole world, and a whole life unlived. I am so glad I am young!

The light glitters like a gemmed veil, the roofs and towers of the houses are gold, the canals are edged by rainbows of blue and rose and yellow. A great building—a white, Moorish, fairy-palace building—stands at the meeting of mythical, foaming waters. The awnings are broad blue and white stripes, such as you think they would paint in a picture of Algiers, and groups of red geraniums mark intervals on the marble balustrade. Canals

creep in and out under carved bridges; the water is liquid enamel, with, here and there, waterfalls spraying diamonds. The sun has the whole world warmed into a luscious acceptance of life.

You stand aside and watch it, and know it is unutterably lovely, and that you are enjoying it supremely. But you can't hold the charm for more than a second. Why can't things be sufficient?

One should be a different person, a different epoch, a different emotion in order to match every city, and one must have memories of realities for this, not moods of Art. Anyway, feeling, appreciation, brain, are acquired things to our humanity. Mind is merely an instinct—a manner of monkey's tail to swing from one cocoanut success to another.

Friday.—Jim had drawn two chairs to the dark corner of the stern, and I felt a scene in the atmosphere. I had dressed

for it. I knew that the little crescent of a moon set on the pale blue sky, the mystic night twilight, the scent of the pines and sea, and the jars of mimosa and geraniums on the deck, would have their inevitable effect. I understand the Celtic temperament. But being only half Irish I am also on the other side of the footlights and see the paint on its face.

The green gauze certainly makes me look unearthly, and with my huge chinchilla motor coat over it, I look rather like the front page of "Jugend."

I was curious. He is muscular to a degree that in a society not openly polyandrous is quite immoral. He belongs to a type that is the only type which I label as male at all, and I wanted to see if this kind of thing is only anatomical, or if there is something beyond.

What attraction I have for him I cannot understand. My inconsistencies,

moods, the very temperament that Oscar plays on as on a violin, is as uncomprehended by this thing of muscle and eyes as the possibilities of Schumann. He would like to grind out sentiment from women with the surety and routine of arias from a hand organ.

Men feel a relaxed mood in regard to them as quickly as a bloodhound scents blood. I asked him a question, and he leaned half way over my chair to answer.

I endured that. I do not allow any personal feeling to interfere in my psychological experiments.

And then, when my hand was in his, and I heard him say the things that are the key to actualities—if you want to use them—I knew how little the mere words, the mere facts count.

"Let me kiss you—only once—even if you don't care. You might give me this. —Ah"—he leaned nearer—"how I want

to bring my lips into contact with your flesh!"

Why do men think it necessary to use such brutal phrases to me? Or do they use them to every woman? But the words were empty from him—yet what Oscar said had bruised my soul.

It did not even make me angry—it merely bored me, like a page of Baudelaire, badly translated.

I shook my hand from his.

Thursday.—Of course we all know—all literature dins it into us consciously or unconsciously—that pleasure, altruistic or otherwise, is the aim of life.

Shall it be Swinburne or Spencer? Shall I be content to be deceived, or commence everything with an instigatory sneer?

All the gods are greedy for what I have gained. I have the riches of the world, all

the world really has to work with—Youth, Youth! It is the big stake, and they all want it. It is amusing to feel the angels and the devils, if there are any, contending for what in olden times they were pleased to call a soul.

I can decide, and the time has come now when I must choose one way or the other. Either way would be interesting, of course, if followed to its extreme; but which will give me the most pleasure?

Even in the greatest ignorance, we may get some sudden sense of life, and I imagine that, after all, it really doesn't make very much difference what you do, it all depends on the way you do it; and that all the agonies around all the big words in our language are tricks to make small people seem big. They have no imagination, therefore they say lies are wrong; they create a virtue out of their impotence. People have gifts for great, magnificent

braveries; and the weak and cowardly and abortive brand them as sins.

It is absurd to talk about deciding, when every vein in me aches for all the adventure and the beauty of the world. If we are worth anything at all we want all the magnificence the world has, and we are not worth having it if we don't get it.

To have the courage of your excess, to find the limit of yourself!

But still, I have not quite lost the trick of delusion. It may be merely because I am young, but some dream still persists; —the race of the blue mysterious sea, the fluent night hung with stars, the passing of cities with names jewelled and set in gold. But I know that my pleasure in it is all fantastic, physical, story-made. It has been like taking long breaths of a flower; it is the flower of life, we get its perfume only once.

Afterwards, no doubt, the world

changes. As we grow older the liquid jewelling grows dull and solid.

Myself too! Most women turn to salt, looking back.

ST. PETERSBURG

THE Dunnes' yacht *Pythia.*

August.—St. Petersburg gets into the blood; it has gone to my brain. A tray of wet, wonderful, pink roses in the stone square outside the palace, and the brazen clang of military music. Redness, blood, power, strength—the strength that wants and takes, the unhesitating strength of brute and brains. The width of the Nevsky Prospect, the rush of the horses, absolutely indifferent to anything which may come in their way; it is Northern and it is new, and it is insatiably greedy. I feel the gilt domes and granite bases, I understand the warmth now, the cold that comes later. I can imagine the flame of sun-blazed snow around the stone and the

colour of the roofs. But with everything that seems familiar about it, there is, too, the charm of some unknown sumptuousness of temperament. It is the stark realisation of useless gorgeousness, alive, virile, huge; imagination realised, and as useless as the iridescence of a humming-bird's wing, or the gemmed scales of a snake. It perpetuates the race nevertheless. It has the same effect as Nature's loveliness, who accomplishes her purpose in scarlet and perfume and velvet moths. It runs over and drips to the slighter minds who breed their designs in the shadow of red brick rows and comfortable, grey stone churches.

But if we can't exactly equal the grandeur of the Russian greed—the Proteus crouched at the edge of Europe—we can at least get the variety of the junk shop. We, too, can get the Protean charm of life. But in grasping music

now, and colour next, and afterwards turning to words, perhaps we miss the grace of all—miss the power to feel completely any single thing. "O thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again." But what? but who? but when? Every different person in oneself is responsive to different people, and one couldn't keep a sort of emotional rabbit-hutch in eternity where one could give each affinity in turn its own infinite embrace.

I'm afraid even transcendental constitutions couldn't stand the strain.

After the fleshly mood that St. Petersburg gives, after the brutal swagger of the Cossacks, the whir of fast horses, I felt rather out of place in the strictly spiritual gathering of Murillos and Correggios in the Hermitage: the red-mouthed Madonnas, the unexcited saints, the questioning of painted eyes.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

Life does not seem now to have any time for the dreams of impotent moments, pressing its lips to the mouth of the future . . . and the marble staircase is so high, the marble halls so very cold and long! The massive, bent monsters of men and women, holding up the portico of the Hermitage, are like the senses that strive to get their satisfaction from the things inside.

But when I went to St. Isaac's for the afternoon service, the gilt gates of the High Altar were open, the red in the Christ's robe window showed with the crimson of a sunset that mixed into the darkness. The rapture of the voices touched me, like a memory.

But you don't regret people, you regret the mood you had with them. The jewels on the mitres of the priests were naked flame; the colours of the columns of malachite and lapis lazuli changed and moved,

as though some memory of light had stirred to the depths of unborn worlds.

The 27th.—St. Petersburg realises many dreams. I don't know whether it is altogether profitable; a dream realised is dead; and Peterhof is posed as for all the extravagance of life that women long for. You walk with the ghosts of dead empresses, through its mirrored galleries.

But all women are to themselves creatures of infinite power, if they only had the opportunity to exercise it. Given beauty and Egypt, what chorus girl could not play Cleopatra? It is only, after all, the lovers of Cleopatra that have made her famous. But we, we who have no money, no empire, no power, what have we to make up for the gold tissue and rose garlands and diamonds, for the hundred lovers picked out from the cleverest and

finest of the world, as one picks out fish or pheasants?

We have Virtue! I turned and surveyed my black-gauze-dressed, thin body in one of the silver-framed mirrors and laughed aloud.

Virtue!

I shall never put on a grey dress and say that I am good, simply because I haven't the money to put on a white satin one and say that nothing is wicked.

For Sin is an extravagance for the rich. Oh, how I want money, how I want money!

MOSCOW

Thursday.—They have kept themselves apart from life, and have had to adapt themselves to civilisation with a rush. I have kept myself apart from life, and shall probably adapt myself to reality with just such suddenness.

Only a hundred years ago, and they had torture in their prisons: only a year ago, and I was in the still garden in Dresden, and forced myself, with the sense of personal insult, to read Nietzsche. And the other things too that have stayed with me as questions to be answered! The "And each man kills the thing he loves," for instance.

Moscow explains that. That is, the summer of Moscow explains it. What

would the winter mean—my winter, for I am of the North, too? I know the sun on the long, spiked icicles hanging from snow-weighted trees; the organ of the moon swelling through the white silence of a zero night. We of the North, we are a race apart.

The colour of mind is the whole of geography, and here you feel the incentive of the sun that stays into the night, the unfelt heat of the stars on the snow. In the North, men long to drag down warmth from the sky.

But we can go from North to South, and vary it with the temper of the East, and be a hundred people, a hundred emotions. We can be heir of all the desire of history, if we only travel enough. People are all the effect of places, not of themselves.

Ivan the Terrible's coffin stands in its

black box—wooden ugliness on wooden trestles—in one of the churches. I didn't know it was there, yet this thing that would have set every nerve screaming elsewhere merely looked strong here. It was so essentially a coffin that the whole horror was taken away—rough planks painted black, made to hold a dead man. I who have fled in nausea from the mummy room of the British Museum looked at this box stolidly and felt that this was real life, that this was truth.

Death is ugly, inevitable, universal; and we take it as a tragic surprise. It is the flummery we have allowed our minds to build around death and honour and love that makes half, nearly all, of the despair of the world.

But I suppose it would sterilise life if we thought of things as they are; if we watched the stagnant pools in which we grow such lilies.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

There is something maddening in the Russian August sun. Here in Moscow it spreads over all the red and the gold. It makes the colour change and swell with it, and you could imagine genii and incubi and long-taloned spirits of past evils creeping over the ramparts and playing with red-hot pitchforks in the quiver of the oblique light.

The pinnacles are twisted as though seized by giant fingers in a spasm of cruelty; the red walls are open wounds.

It answers to something in our blood; we too were barbarians once. You are shown all the pleasures you do not know, and all the greed of the human animal raises its head to meet it.

I sat down on the balustrade beside Alexander's statue in the Kremlin, to let the place give me its mood. Why should I not live picturesquely and determinedly the life I want? The general public's

view of life is, after all, only the opinion of the paving-stones of society; and the only attention one should pay them is not to let them find you out; for stones applied unkindly are distinctly painful.

Big people have always entirely followed their own inclinations. Why should one remember the names of people who do what everyone else does? To break a law with success is to be illustrious.

But still, what laws are there for me to break—or what have I the brains to break—without being caught? It takes quite an unusual order of intelligence to be able to rob a bank successfully, for instance. To be what is honest takes no intelligence at all. The majority of people are forced to be honest.

My mind shuddered just a little before the mood of Moscow, before the colouring that tempts the mind to forgotten phases of infinite license, before the blue of the

river that gathers it all together in the curve of a bruised arm. Its gold globes create another heaven over the city—the heaven of Moscow, where infinite instinct spends its force in eternal warfare . . . where "each man kills the thing he loves." The light over the sinister roofs could illuminate just such things.

I have no doubt that each man kills the thing he loves—to match his own dying.

My mind is dead to-night, my flesh is grey. Everything that I call a sense seems putrid in this desert of loathsome fact.

The garden for the dinner was so lovely —my blood always swings to lights and the hum of waltzes—and the Russian bands, with their barbaric clamour of the brass, put effervescence in my veins.

But after the eccentricity of the dinner at the Spanish house, the tremour of the

Spanish dancers, their undulation, the empty sensuality irritated me; for what was the point of all this suggestiveness, before people who hadn't the slightest intention of following out the more or less indicated action? All half-way things make a situation intolerable, and I slipped away at last, and got outside with Grace's maid, to be with propriety again.

The men at the tables in the open garden were in uniform, some were singing, but the chiffon over my face kept me from seeing them very clearly. I did not want to see them clearly; I only wanted the charm of the trees in the stinging air, and to hear the waltzes that crept out from every side, like open arms.

At last, when we had gone down into a silent, lily-bordered path, the sound hushed itself in the trees and I could uncover my face in the darkness.

At that moment my body was tingling

with the joy of it—the wide radiant stars, the smell of the flowers, the damp earth odour, the flickering memory of the dancing, the sense of my youth and fearlessness, and of all the unpermitted joy before me.

We had come to a gate, and a carriage was waiting. I saw the glitter of a sword, the moon striking on metal buttons, then with a rustle two women came down the path.

The girl was beautiful, there was no doubt about that, but the life was wiped out of her face like breath from a glass.

There was no place for us to turn, and, as she passed us, her dead face went to stone. As they drove away, the man dragged her to him and bent over her.

There was no mistake—even I knew. She was marked from her hat to her feet for what she was. Her skirts had almost touched mine. I felt slimed all over.

And these are the realities of life, this is being human, this is man and woman! Ah, if I could tear my humanity out of me!

PARIS

October.—Paris is one white, nervous disappointment.

It needs millions, disillusion, and bad temper smeared with an appreciation of Art, to care for Paris. It is the apotheosis of the theatrical. The shape of its streets, its unwalkable squares, the bawdy insistence of its lights, make it a very good resting-place for people who are afraid to rest.

Paris when it rains—autumn rain—and the umbrellas are up, is like a nude statue with a hat on—a hat on and perhaps gloves—gloves with holes in the finger tips.

The huge, treed, white Champs Elysées! A drive only fit for millionaires. Anyone

else is ridiculous on it. And their ceilings, their furniture, their life, only made for women with diamonds! No one else could live up to the part. Then, afterwards, at the picture-galleries, the book-stalls, the straining, unreal hungry Art that looks on, the rabid thirst for experience. It is so unutterably false, this search for feeling, because nothing is felt spontaneously. They vaccinate themselves with emotion.

France offends me by its long white roads, the endless straight dry poplars, the bent horses, the lean dogs. You imagine the frugality, the monotony, the patience in the houses—patience under dulness; an advertisement to the gods that here is a corpse eating and drinking and sleeping.

Paris displays the art of the upholsterer. Loveliness of delicate carvings, of chairs, of mellow vague figures of women on pastel tapestries, of gilt-framed sofas, of the trembling of Venetian chandeliers,

It is full of overwrought discontent, brittle like the grey, broken dust of leaves. Life spills itself out, in a gibber of lights, and grey statued length of municipal stone. The monkey-men on their dirty little fiacres prowl unceasingly everywhere. You feel how desperate it would be to be poor in Paris. How desperate I would be if I were poor in Paris, if, by the most magnificent fluke, I were not driving in motor broughams and dining under Boucher ceilings!

The flowers in the beds of the Tuileries gardens are sodden in the rain. It is all grey and drenched and uncomfortable.

I am only happy when I am driving over the curved bridges and looking down on the bubbling water and seeing the sky and clouds change, even in this October bleakness, to blue and violet, over the parades of stone excess.

But at night! Then it seems to answer

to something of the name it has. The whole place shows its skeleton of globes, gas, and electricity, and dances and grimaces over the river; or lies with its joints spread out in grinning radiance, till the dawn draws over it the hard flesh of buildings.

Such velvets!—butterflies and blossoms against a May sky. Lace too, laces that are clouds and spray and white lilac, all but the perfume and the jewels.

I am wondering what I am going to plan, how I am going to live without all this, and then I forget how I want it in the honest admiration of it.

I wander off alone sometimes. That is when I enjoy things, that is when I own them; and I greed over the Rue de la Paix and the Rue Royale, all the more because I know my days of luxury are so surely coming to an end—next Thursday and all is over. But when I am alone I can plan

magnificent flukes, intrigues, dark-lantern adventures—stone cellars, underground passages, secret doors; all the craft that has been filtered into my brain from the Mysteries of Udolpho, through the House of Usher, down to what I have heard of intelligent people in our own day who have had brains enough to rob banks successfully; combs and bracelets, and bands of orchids and pansies, and ferns mixed with diamonds, as though a sudden frozen wind had petrified a hot-house, and sprinkled the flowers with ice.

To drag out the very gold-glittering soul of the world, its thoughts and dreams, possibly its regrets, its unborn stars, and to put them around our throats and make them sparkle over our hair! I feel myself palpitating for want of all this frozen sunlight, then I find myself in the Place Vendôme and the column over-weighs me with its strength. I am only flesh and blood,

and these stone houses, and that column, and all cities, are the bars in front of jewels.

It was raining in the Rue de la Paix. It was raining, I think, all over the world. The universe was ribbed in muddy grey.

Saturday.—Mirrors are a premonition of Hell. The gallery of Versailles, with its weeping windows of pale trees, and slow panels of processions of Myself—the thing I have to fight destiny with.

I wondered if the floor wouldn't swell away in the waves of its slipperiness from my skirts. I tried to walk softly. Napoleon had been there, Louis le Grand, Marie Antoinette. My silk ruffles slid along with a little, sibilant hiss till I drew them up and faced myself, white and overwrought, in one of the mirrors.

The whole of the past—crime, magnifi-

cence, history—pressed over it, and I was so insignificant, so new, so pretty! The very trees under their gruesome rain were stately, had meaning, had memories, meant something. And I was nothing. I had only youth and life and the power to dare anything I liked: but to dare would use up so much energy.

The French moods all make you gloomy, the spasms of Rousseau with his detestable Houdetot, the crucifixions of Huysmans, the drunkenness of Verlaine. Even the butterfly dust of the gayest of Maupassant is scattered at last in a madhouse. There one seems to drag oneself out of Bastille cabriolets, to see the venomous red of the revolutionary cap. The Monna Lisa is appropriately in Paris. She, too, is disillusioned and looks out on her world with the safe sneer of a

woman who sees the joke. But I don't want to see the joke—just jet.

Tuesday. — The Salon d'Automne makes one tremble before the possibilities in men. These artists must have had models and studied life for this. We are capable of this—if one is, all are. But it must have taken long to reach the stability of the mood required to put it into Art. The mind shudders before the impossibility of return.

It offends me, this mood; there is a shamelessness in the trees, a vagrance in the lights, chrome-white bodies against hard pastels of vermilion and sepia. You feel the growing prurience under the thick flesh. The women sprawl everywhere; there are no men. These are women; I am a woman. What suggested to these artists that women thought like that? You begin to look to see if the lace of a

woman's petticoat is not patterned with toads, and if it is not the pulse of a bat's wing that is making the rise and fall of her surpliced fichu. People don't think in terms of the Exposition d'Automne. A suggestiveness that makes the body all finger tips, the body of feeling without nerves, without the brain to picture it. The love without nerves—the love of idiots, of the insane.

God of misery, why are we beasts with minds?

LONDON

November.—I have come out of my theatre, I have left my concert, to face the splashing mud and the dirty omnibuses of the street.

All the tapestried fantasy is over. My procession of powdered footmen have melted away like the chorus of a comic opera. Fact, the brutal fact of money, has me by the throat, thrusts me into Bloomsbury, opens the door by a housemaid, pours hot water out of a coarse can into a tin bath tub in the morning, refuses me carriages, stalls, champagne, flowers, and the gentle quiet of the things I want. I have packed away all my pretty dresses. The long trails of chiffon and crêpe de

chine were like sprays of arbutus turning brown and curling up at the edge.

The house is full of Canadians. They know me, of course—everyone knows the Knowleses of Deans Park; but I feel like a vulture in a nest of canaries.

They consider it improper for me to be travelling alone, and only overlook it because I am supposed to be an artist.

But the familiarity of the standpoint suffocates me. It is the mental temper that I once held so passionately myself. The social code of Canada is contemptuous of even the appearance of anything not right.

Cigarettes, bridge, cocktails, the very chiffon on my dressing-gown, seem out of focus, immoral. But it gives me nevertheless an interesting feeling of being something secretly wicked. I have com-

menced to wear a black dress with a bunch of white tulle at my throat.

How I want money! The Rich, the Rich, the Rich: they can take each nerve and moment and instinct, and set it in a park, in a conservatory, under an orchestra, out in the sun, and cheerfully breed every luxuriance our minds and frames can demand. The only limit to their satisfaction is the fact that they are finite. They inherit the mental attitude of the Emperor who tried to get around his limitations in the matter of suppers. Only millionaires live. The others only have a more or less satisfied struggle for existence, to form substrata of society, so that those with money can have their flare up on top.

If I had been born in the slums I would have been an anarchist. How can the poor possibly come out of their fetid dens,

and see carriages and flower-banked windows, without longing to seize the rich by the throat and choke the power of enjoyment out of them? I can never turn aside to let a carriage pass without a mental snarl.

And wealth is for brains and the brave; for those who can get it, it's there to be had. Those who haven't got it are, generally speaking, fools.

But all the things I want are barricaded in by money. Life is no use to me unless I have them. Life indeed in itself is of no value to anyone. Why should one spend existence in earning money, merely to eat and to have a roof under which to sleep? I do not want to earn a living, I want to live. If I have talents they are for my own pleasure, to increase the number of things in the world that are beautiful and interesting to me; why should I turn them into loaves of bread?

The very fact of being a woman makes earning a living an absurdity. We want to be consoled by all the lovely things of existence—soft cushions and flowers and lace and music—for the chain of our oblique life.

And they are all in the world, they are all to be had, these things I want so passionately, this paradise of beauty! No imagined, vague heaven, but living, palpable things, the luxury of the earth, the quiet of mind to feel it, to fathom it, to go deep into it, smothering the senses in flaming skies and perfume and voluptuous furs.

I am human, I live, I am of the world; and the beauty of the world is supreme and I want it.

The poor are just as much mutilated as though they had an eye gouged out, an ear cut off, fingers lopped off: as if they only had the sense of smell for onions,

sewer gas, and the nastiness of dirty streets.

No, no, I shall live completely; be capable of having all the pleasure life can give, or else pitch away the castrated thing they have given me as life.

Monday.—The pigeons in the courtyard of the British Museum are like those in the piazza of St. Mark's in Venice—flexible, iridescent, smooth. I paused on the steps, and they came near me without fear, making their soft, cuddling sound, their exquisite throats arching with life, the silver feathers glistening in the wet, the one beautiful living thing there.

Human things made of squalor, semi-poverty, grey faces, ugliness, crawled up and down the steps, stood like noisome pools under the mute wide stone: but the Museum stood open, huge, impersonal,

while the diseased streams went in and out between its columns.

Inside the reading-room the dust of dreams has fastened on the place like a cloud of mental parasites. No one is young, none of them will ever be old, they are petrified in eternal wonder.

Kisses, and clouds, and the music of grass, and the little waves of the sea—what have they, or will they know, of these? I too felt shut out. I too am poor. I some day would be—what was that phrase? It was Tennyson of all people—I too would be "old and past desire."

It was intolerable. I swept out and almost stumbled all over the ugly, waddling, stupid pigeons, and telephoned to Jim that I would go with him to Claridge's for tea.

I'm not—old yet. Not yet, not yet, not yet. . . .

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

I am afraid of life. I don't want to live, to prove that Life is unreal, and that dreams are the only truth. I know I could let my mind use my life with absolute unscrupulousness for its own amusement;—make it a dress to masquerade in, wines to excite, lights to dazzle, while Mind would sit aside, like a grinning Chinese god, watching the effect of the differently expressed spasms of instinct.

If I once chose reality, I would not like to think that there was any pleasure, any excitement of emotion, no matter how forbidden, that I could not know. But are the emotions of humanity after all so extreme, so intense? Passion, love, honour, lust: they are the motives of Art; but how literally would these things affect me if put into the shape of actual days and flesh?

We human beings play the children to

the Pied Piper of Hamelin of the Poets. We are led an absurd dance to the tune of pain and desire and regret. The mental pace is set for us of tears, of stated sorrows, and penitences. But it's all lies. There is no trouble, no regret, no pain, but what is functional, physical, machine-made, automatic. We should be as blithe as the beasts, except for the finger- and tooth-ache they have too, if we didn't deceive ourselves about the permanence and quality of our appetites.

I don't; I know that, outside physical accident, I could never have what is called sorrow, except the grinding grief of not having enough money to get the beauty out of the world, the joy of living. I even almost wonder if it is worth while to put the automatic humanity of me into motion, whether the amusement I would get out of it would pay for the risk I would

run of being found out in stealing its strings.

A winter fog is creeping over London, a shuddering fog, trembling with phantom hands that wave before the eyes; shivering with ghost faces that grin in the bubbling lights. It steals through the iron lacework of boughs to fawn on the leaden outline of the water.

It is hard to come out of the cloister of books and music to the raw world of men and women. To have all the bloom of the world's genius rubbed off by seeing the realities of what it pretends to describe.

We want to have everything always at the fever point of some artist who has seen it when it massed in with some extreme mood of his own. As well see in every sooty, suburban train the railway painting of Turner. You suspend yourself by elastic to the height of an inspira-

tion, and rebound in sickening jolts from cathedral pinnacles to the mud on the street.

I am restless; I am consumed with restlessness; and I do not know what I want. London called, and I came back; but I am stronger yet than any power that is forcing me. I belong to myself; I will go away. The adventurer's blood is like that. We Colonials were all bred of adventure at some time.

All Europe is waiting, and the tempting South—but still I do not want to go. Every new country, every new interest for the eyes, alters us; and I want to be the myself of to-day for a while yet—the myself that knew the London of the hawthorn.

Dear London of the parks, the golden river, the towers of St. Stephen's! But

even the Devil hadn't sufficient common sense to stay in Heaven.

The luxury of London, its strength, hold me. I walk down on the Embankment, and watch the red and yellow sails dragging down on the sun-netted river; and I wonder, if I had been a man, what adventure I would have staked for the things I want. I would be a pirate in a red cap and a belt stuck with daggers.

The big slow squares, the mute houses that I knew such a little time ago—all marble and paintings and silk—the lustrous park, empty of the muslin and talk and lace, and with only moving masses of huddled sheep, and the mist wavering through the trees.

And yet it is the same London, my London, the velvet sound of the wheels, and the elusive yellow light, as globe after globe melts into the secret mist.

It is all a theatre, a play. I wonder if the people over here realise their scenic effect—that their lives are things to look at with their castles, their titles, their traditions? They are always bending to their traditions, and a Past is about as big a drag to a nation as it is to a woman. But we Colonials are always impatient over precedent. To remember a precedent is to remember it is time for change. To change—a change at a risk perhaps—but anything, only change! To stay still is to die. To desire to stay still is to be emasculated before you die.

I loathe London. I hate the rich more than any Socialist ever hated them, because I want what they have, for the beauty of things, the soul of things; not just for the mere crass fact of a bank account. I hate people who have money with the part of me that is everlasting;

it is not money that is denied me, it is life.

I suppose if I chose to work for it, if I wasted years in going around with my hair half down and my collar unfastened —my throat always swells up when I pretend to think—I could get it if I would use my brains. But I don't choose to use them. I detest my brains. If a woman wants to make money, the front row in the chorus is the place for her. Work is as unnatural to a woman as virtue to a man. Women who make money by their brains always seem to me like the unhappy monkeys who career round in a circus on ponies' backs, in the futile attempt to emulate the appearance of a jockey.

When I go out and see the carriages, the motors, the women wrapped up in priceless furs; when I see the diamonds at night; when I get glimpses of the marble-walled houses; when I get the breath of

orchids; when I see carvings and paintings and lace and brocade that I want, my soul sickens. I love it all; it's so fathomlessly lovely; it is the climax of loveliness that man has made; it's all the beauty our brains can conceive of, and I love it, and I want it.

I won't be shut out. That is what life is. If I can't have these things, I can die.

I am going to Monte Carlo, and I am going to gamble for it. I am glad it is considered wicked, I am glad I consider it wicked, I am glad it is dangerous. I kiss the idea that I shall force Fate.

I must have them—three months, six weeks again of the glamour, brocade walls and motors and orchids, costly dresses, little fragile lace fans with mother-of-pearl sticks.

To see Oscar again. I can play it again, have it again, know it again. My blood

is flaming. I have a big bunch of Parma violets in front of me, and the window is wide open, letting the wind sweep in over me. I am burning with fear, desire, excitement. My veins are humming like electric wires.

What was it Lady Macbeth said—"To unsex her"—to empty her body of a woman's nature. Well, I renounce my country while I am doing these things; while I touch even the borders of black things, I denationalise myself. We wastrels of atavism are better in Europe than at home. I am no longer Canadian.

But I must say that half the pleasure that I am getting out of going to Monte Carlo is because I was brought up to look on it as the climax of immorality. A rigorous early training is necessary to impart a good deal of the sparkle into life.

It will be a hideous world when everything is permitted. Our nerves can't sup-

ply all the dynamics, we need laws to break in order to give our vitality exercise.

MONTE CARLO

December.—Beside the train at the station red geraniums dripped over the wall. The sea was purple; a broad band of vermilion barricaded the sky, and, as we poured from the train, there was an even cry from somewhere of "ascenseur, ascenseur!"—raucous, unchanging. I think that on some who knew Monte Carlo very well that cry would be permanently marked.

Behind the station, a white sweep of steps curved up into a garden of palms. Little constellations of lights glittered through the trees.

The horses swept me up the steep hill. Their blood, too, was going fast; the whole atmosphere was quick.

The inflation of its mood held me up till dinner. When I walked alone into the dining-room, I came face to face for the first time in my life with the open world; the room gaped with snakes' heads. My body turned to flame under my clothes.

And then, when I was alone, I faced it. I could be held on the spikes of their sneers. I closed my eyes against the memory of how they had looked at me.

I pressed my lips to the carpet as though it could save me; I clung to the chairs, to the cold iron of the bed; I sobbed to be let free.

But I got myself steadied enough to listen to fact at last. Why have I dreamt and theorised and planned and decided?

What was the use of thinking things if I couldn't do them? I had said I was ready to pay any price for what I wanted. Did I then lack the courage? I got up

and looked at myself in the glass, at my bloodshot eyes, and my cheeks red from the floor.

But the extremes of agony exhaust, so that when I stepped out of the hotel, the air sweet from the flowers, the sight of the palms, silent against the stars, wrapped me suddenly in the quiet of its beauty, gave me the armour, the knowledge of the safety I carry against pain.

And, after all, why not take it more easily? People who know me, or people I might know, would understand. What did the others matter, more than the nastiness of creeping things in the grass?

Have I a temperament blessed or accursed that, even as I walked across the little space of trees and flower-beds, the perfume, the blue radiance of the sky, the sparkle of the white Casino, the pulse of light, as the wide doors swung backwards

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and forwards, lit up jet by jet the illumination of my blood, till my brain and senses were glittering, like vast halls blazing with crystal chandeliers?

I went down on the Terrace to-night, to wash out the memory of the faces—just to blend the glamour of the excitement with the beauty of the night.

The Terrace was empty; it was cold; the lights outlined the half hoop. Monaco was a fairy drop curtain from a theatre. A lantern, hung on the black line of masts, trembled against the rocks; the dark cliff with its palace was painted against a soft, purple sky; an icy moon bent over the purple sea; the water made soft hushed noises against the stones. It was aloof, restricted, exquisite. When I walked close to the bushes, the wet smell of the hawthorn—English hawthorn—swam over me. I leaned back against the

balustrade, over the sea, and let the white palace behind, and the trembling sky, and the brooding sea, take me in their arms. They were Life, Fate, Beauty incarnate.

All that I wanted was held in the rooms poised on the cliff. Africa was just on the other side of the sea. The air was sibilant with excitement. The very palms had fingers that quivered in the grasp of the sky.

Thursday.—This morning is so peculiarly morning—all opening out, fresh and undiscovered. The perfume of the flowers is so tremulous in the breeze that it comes to me almost like a laugh.

How absurd to bring down Nietzsche to read in this scintillating daylight! It was just as ridiculous as all the other parade of pretence-life I have saturated myself with.

Monte Carlo is so sincerely false, frank

in its denial of all naturalness. I feel myself rested, because there is no strain after effect.

It is the first time that I have ever seen anything completely itself.

The gardens are openly exotic; the Casino is brazenly for the excitement. The very birds that murmur around the cornices are merely alive because they happen to have escaped from a shooting-match. There is no poverty, no ugliness. The flowers are kept moist and wet in spite of the sun. It is supremely unnatural, completely satisfying.

I have followed the artificial all my life, and now I have found its temple. One's mind is hot-housed, under glass, at Monte Carlo. It is all posed. The rocks are grey and dusty, and everything here is gilt and filigreed whiteness. I have found the climax of all the posed moods, and now there is nothing left but to find

the climax of the spontaneous. I must follow the natural to its source.

Tuesday.—The system went wrong last night. Of course, I knew I couldn't always win. I calculated to lose one or two of my banks: but the callous raking in of one's money puts a despairing futility over any plans. So this afternoon I thought I might as well arrange for any future vindictiveness on the part of Fate.

At the end of the road that runs by the sea there is a little hidden villa, and the wall is hung with climbing pink geraniums and heliotrope. The shore is heaped up with big rocks just there, and the living sapphire of the waves breaks all over them like showers of white chrysanthemums. If one had to drown oneself—and it's against all my principles to remain alive—should I find any difficulty in the affair? One would soon be brained

against these rocks. The first shock would stun—I didn't fill in the details. I never bother my mind with filling in details. Fate attends to that more or less satisfactorily after you have given her the broad outlines.

I went up there immediately after lunch. There may have been some faint feeling at the back of my mind that Fate would see me, be sorry for last night, be frightened at what I might do if she pressed me too far.

But I was going to be stern with Fate, and go right up and inspect the probable scene of my probable and deeply to be lamented death.

So young, so clever, so charming—a life so full of promise! The waves sighed against the little stones as I walked slowly along the dusty yellow road. I looked at them with tears. What a brute Fate was! A wave of perfume from the flower-cov-

ered wall came to me as I neared it—the heliotrope was shining from the spray. It was a well-chosen place. I forgot my high-heeled, fragile slippers, and, catching up my skirts, stumbled to the very edge of the rocks, where the clear blue waves pounded in. It made one half in love with death.

And then I got the fume of a sewer, saw that on the waves floated scraps of orange-peel and strips of melon. It was the opening of a drain.

Fate had filled in the details.

The superb Terrace and I have it all to ourselves. The perfume from the hawthorn; the smell of the sea; the superb, trembling sea; the low trembling clouds; the sweet clear empty air. Nobody but a fool like myself would walk or sit out here in this intermittent drizzle. Such green on the slant side of Monaco, and

the quivering, swaying mists, settling down on the mountains leading the way to Italy. It is the sea that touches Africa. And, oh, the smell of everything! It is the perfume that goes to my head and compels me to feel it completely—this sodden sweet insistence of flowers and wet earth. A smell as oppressive as tuberoses and musk, as intoxicating as the reel of air that fills you, as you stagger up on deck, for the first time on a stormy day at sea.

Nature is always in love, and I am tired of philosophies and theories; I am tired of acting, of living up to the inflated disappointments of great men. I am not disappointed, and I am not a man.

And yet, to-night, when I folded up the new 1000-franc notes in a kind of rapture —I could feel the lace they would buy, see the houses where I would be, feel under

me again the purr of the thick wheels under the trees in the park—it suddenly came to me, as a thing I knew, but refused to say in my mind, that really all this mattered very little. I had known it with those people in that way once. I had a motive for repeating the scene, or else I would spend my money on luxury in other settings. I had enough money now to take me to the Orient, if I should choose that.

The Orient of myself first. What is the use of all the inconvenience, and restricted mind of being a woman, if I don't use all the opportunity of sex to give me what amusement it can?

I feel myself burking it, hushing myself away, in the liquid jewel of the night Mediterranean, overset by a brazen, red moon. That's the kind of effect one wants to put into existence—this passion of the cosmos, where even moons that are dead

can draw the living sea; and we are only human. I don't suppose there are really any incubi. I shall have to put up with what I can get, be satisfied with mere humanity: complete my humanity, much as I despise it, in the only way possible. And Oscar is the most complete man I know. He is the most man. He is more or less a brute, and he is so remorsefully, so almost pathetically, aware of the fact. He is so blatantly masculine, in his heavy, dark ponderousness, that I almost feel as amused at him as I would at a child, or a toy elephant. But at the present moment what I want from him is a jolt to my mind, a practical demonstration of Art.

A woman really cannot understand painting or music or books, till she has had the actual experience of those laboriously concealed things which are evidently the foundation of them all. As a mat-

ter of fact, I suppose it's part of one's education.

But considering the money and—other things—I am going to spend on it, my post-graduate course will come rather expensive.

To-night I flung myself out of the Casino, and fled to the Terrace—my Terrace, my place with Fate. The moon, the trembling stars, the moving sea, the blue air and blue sky and blue sea. Monaco pierced the night with its lights. The palms sharpened against the sky, and showed the stars between; and I walked up and down, up and down, to drown with physical weariness the pain to go back, and find out how it was going to end.

London! London! I looked at the stark line of Monaco, and my whole existence was straining to the velvet lights around Westminster.

No grey South and bleak hard sun, but the gentleness, the glamour, the completeness of London.

I am sick of subtleties, and half-expressed vagueness, of all the symphonies I have heard, and pictures I have seen, and books I have read.

January 15th.—It seemed so ridiculous to think of going to the Brahms Second Symphony at the Concert Classique—the Dance of Death Andante—when all the time I knew that to-night I am going to play for the last time. Just one more thousand francs to get, just one more. I feel already the cold sweat around my mouth.

But I can't start again, once more, the slow, long climbing up by way of ten francs and louis to hundreds of pounds. I haven't the nerve any more, I haven't the nerve.

For six weeks I have lived with life and death and Fate spinning daily to that ball. I have risked what I am going to risk to-night again and again; but this is for the last time, it means more. I can't watch my life any more spin endlessly in that inexorable circle. I can't hear any more *"Faites vos jeux."* God, haven't I played the game? Can't I rest now?

I won't play by daylight. I keep to that, though every nerve drags and strains and pierces me to the tables. I stayed on the Terrace all morning—leaning over the balustrade by the steps, tenting myself in by the frills of my parasol, but seeing all the changing, swaying, moving world of the people stir underneath, domed by an oval of sea and sky.

The flower shops tempted me as I went back to breakfast, and I bought great bunches of violets and lilies—lilies for my

room—the perfume makes me forget—and violets for myself for the concert.

Then tea at Ciro's. I could look through the palms from my table to the Mediterranean, turning violet now, with little quivers of rose in the air above it, from the sunset. And the orchestra there played that thing of Heine's—"Treu sein sollst du mir am Tage, und mich lieben in den Nächten." Yes, Fate, I have been true to you!

Midnight.—I have won. I have gained life. I have won.

It is real, though I don't understand it. I have won.

When I gathered up the gold and notes, I felt as though I were gathering up rainbow gold into my hands. It is life, and this was the price. But the gold was real.

I walked slowly out of the rooms as though something would hold me back,

prove it a dream; but the mocking, unending cry went on—the doors swung softly together—they closed out the last *"Le jeu est fait"*—and then I got to the night, the living night. I had escaped, I was free.

I sprang down the steps at the side of the Casino as though I were mad. The perfume of the night gathered me up. The heat and fever and the torture were all inside, all past. I got down to the Terrace—the bland, moon-green, shimmering Terrace, Terrace of the perfume, of the wavering shadows of the palms, of the translucent moon, of the borders of Africa, of the skirts of life and beauty and delight.

I clung to it as though it were something living. The Terrace had held me in such gentleness—palms and moonlight and flowers—when I had lost; and now that the play was over, I came to it to say

good-bye. I kissed the thought of it. The very soft cry of the sea on the rocks far below. I ran my hands over the balustrade. It had cooled them when they had been burning with fever in the unrest of the other nights.

But it is over, the pain is over. I have won. And now I am going to get the power of life, grasp it, know it, plunge into it. It is mine, my life, my humanity, my world. I am going to know all the joy that living life means.

SECOND PART

THE VOYAGE

THE VOYAGE

FIRST DAY

THE sea trembles in silver links; each crest is caught in the mesh of dawn.

I couldn't sleep any more, so I came up to get into the vastness of it—the dawn, the sea. I feel that my whole universe is staggering in births, in dawns, in huge lights that are creeping up out of void. God, but I am frightened of life! My love, you have made me as unknown as the sea to myself. I feel part of the world.

It is not he or I, but Nature, that is triumphant; this is her ecstasy of success. Virgins, perhaps, are the dead of her

world, lost spirits of life, ghosts that flicker out to extinction. It is possible that their souls reinhabit the pallid vitality of flowers, or seek to impress their form on some futile creature of the woods. At least, they are lifted out of life unchanged, into the mystery that made them out of nebulæ.

I seem to have broken into a new world, to have been caught into a net of gold. The water presses close, like instinct—the endless craving, unsatisfied, unworn; the eternal youth of desire, that gives the eternal, futile surrender.

I let him brand me with himself, to make me belong to humanity.

I had been with him before in the Temple, in that last, marvellous summer. I had seen it, and the fountains, and the mysterious, luminous shimmer of the distant river; the wide, crimson flowers; the latticed windows opening out on old gar-

dens, veiled with the scent of white hawthorn.

And this last time was the last day, the last hour and moment of Romance, of Romance as it had been. The river was struck red with sudden flames of the winter sun; the sky was livid; the stones dripped moisture; the books on the shelves looked for ever closed.

I remember I went back to the window and looked out, where before I had seen the flowers, and had felt the perfume of the hawthorn.

And he had been silent; he had waited without moving,—he had waited as he had waited ever since the first day we met; waited till I should turn and let him come to me.

And now I am taking my new life out alone, to face the sea, and become part of me, undefiled by the contact of usual life.

I could not endure to feel, that this marvel of what men and women are, should decline from its height of branded surprise.

When I left him, that flaming afternoon, I could not have stayed at home as I promised. I went to the music, the thing that had led me on, the very essence of what I had done.

It was Brahms—a string quartette. The unshaken music caught my flying nerves in steady hands.

I remember looking at the people, as I walked past them to my seat—it was only half an hour before the end—and wondering if they could know that I had just been assisting at the birth of music, the very heart of the desire that was crying from the violins; the meaning of all the beauty that was turning the air of the hall to the vibrations of the voices of the captured gods.

SECOND DAY

THE very waves look ashy and ineffectual this morning; even Nature has her fatigues. Life, too, does not supply the setting for a constant tragedy.

It is the contrast between excitement and ordinary life that has put exaggerated emphasis on such things as those of the other day; it is the fatigue of nerves asking for rest. You wouldn't call running a crime because you were tired after it. If nerves could talk, how they would laugh at our morals! Imagine arranging a social code for muscular exercise!

One should vary experience by scenery, by winds; by, as I am doing now, the magnificence of the sea. Then it would be easier to balance the sense of strength,

that the momentary flare of creative instinct lends, I suppose, even to the meanest minds.

I am tired, and this sapped daylight suits me.

He assumed instantly that the affair was made of the personal element. There was nothing personal in it, as far as I was concerned. He merely represented the knowledge of Nature to me—a practical demonstration, more or less, of cosmic dynamics.

But we seemed just as much in sympathy before; he only seems less interesting, he no longer represents a mystery. I have nothing to answer that grieved look of craving in his eyes, as when we make a poodle stand on its hind legs too long, with a lump of sugar on its nose.

In one way the knowledge seems to rob the poets, in another to show something

they never suggested. Unless children are the object, it shows that the physical act can be no more important to women than to men. The climax of love is nothing. It is only love that counts.

And I kept myself so immaculately pure for it—I kept my lips untouched for the man I would love, or would think I loved. Perhaps I would have enjoyed it all more, if I hadn't so rigorously denied myself everything of the kind before.

But I want to forget; I want to get back to the dreams—to the dream world, that surrounded me like a globe of glass! You can't set thought to the abandonment of Giorgione, to the passion of Kundry, and find yourself satisfied then by a kiss, by a human act that any reptile in any pond can duplicate. Can you picture the rapture of alligators, or stoop to re-

member anything that mirrors the ecstasy of rats?

I am impatient of humanity in the face of this sea. Better to be drowned, to be lost in the power of the ocean, than to drown your love in the mean outlets of a restricted creation. The beat of the sea on the sand—that is passion: I could pardon submerged continents for remembering the yielding of their existence.

Still, in everything that I have had to do with him, I have been weighted by the inevitableness of what we were to each other. Instinct gibbered to us from every tree we passed, and narcotised us in the breath of each flower we saw. The sun went down, as though weighted by the dreams of damask July days. The world phœnixed itself; and I have to cage the new ornithological object—that is all.

But the translation of an emotion into act is its death, its logical end. I am

another person now, and so make new emotions. I have yet to find out whether my new self gives him a place in them. We approached it, too, from different sides of impression. It was to him the final of a struggle of unrecognised prejudice—he thought it wrong; whereas with me, he is the beginning of cataclysmal knowledge—the knowledge of how Nature makes her worlds, the motive of Art. And I must say I think, in itself, it is inconceivably flat.

These last facts in the fog and cold of winter are all less to me—less to be remembered than the immaterial magic of last summer. That is what it means to me—what his name means to me, what it means to me, being a woman and young. And I can never have it again. No matter what wonder and delight and rapture I may find in life, it cannot give me back the dreams I had before I understood,

We still carry our visions inviolate from eternity, that they should all climax in that unhappy, bleak hour—the smell of the fog, the ashy white of the dying fire.

There is nothing in it to remember; no mystery, no pleasure. All that I have of these is the time when his lips touched the lace on my sleeve; the hour on the Terrace when he first said "I love you," and the night and the stars and life were made one. And all that only means the secret of this winter.

And I have come away, left him. It is all fused into those few minutes in the courtyard, the yellow rain, the iron sky, the eager babbling pigeons fluttering through the wet. And then—I came away; drove, it seemed, straight into the sea. The next morning I had sailed.

The Afternoon.—I have a sodden, dull

sense to-day that perhaps it is all raving against windmills; that the world easily and silently has gone on its subjective manner, and done all those things which I, in a gasped surprised mood, at last surmise exist. I have had suddenly to realise my language.

I sit and look at the words Chastity, Honour, Virginity, Passion, Love. I have played with all, and tried all their power, and yet the world swings on, from getting up to bed-time, in perfect, normal simplicity. I sit down with calmness, and am conscious of enjoying my breakfast. Marianna, Elaine, Isolde—they managed things better.

It is destructive of its value as an artistic factor, to meditate on the exact emotional quality of your virginity, while you are devouring toast and eating a soft-boiled egg.

THIRD DAY

THE only pause we want in life is in voyages like this, when we can measure our memories with big forces and cross to fresh worlds, new motives of ourselves, unknown effects.

If I could only call up the ghosts of the people I would have liked to know: Julian, Wilde, Da Vinci, Rabelais—what men, what lovers! Women only penetrate into life to the extent of the different effects they get from men; and so, of course, variety in our sources of emotion is our most direct way of learning things.

We are not brains; we are only functions with sufficient intellect to fit the needs of the life of our time. Our minds have to be vitalised. A woman's whole

view of life is biased for the time being by the man with whom she is intimate. If the man is clever, it makes a window into distant things, that could not be realised by a woman with just her own brain alone; and, naturally, the greater number of clever men she knows in this way, the larger the outlook she gains on existence.

Knowledge, anyway, is merely the power of comparison; we would never have had Darwin's book on the Origin of Species if he had spent his life dissecting a single bug.

To make life yield its full gamut of possibilities is to be as great an artist as any composer or painter who pours out his vitality to make emotional pleasure for the world. And all the unknown rapture of life is before me. I have stolen the most difficult key; I have defied myself;

I have dragged myself past the guarding beasts that watch instinct; I have given permission to myself for everything, and found there was no mental penalty to pay. The unexplored world is open to me, of all moods, of all countries.

For modern women have to overcome a new law. If we know anything, the laws of so-called morality cannot exist to us. They are seen to be wholly artificial, arbitrary, sops for the masses.

Our extremes of self-consciousness exaggerate personality to an obsession; and sheer modesty, in the woman of highly trained mind, imposes a barrier far more formidable to passion than was ever made by any code of morals.

What I was afraid of wasn't the thing in itself—I had determined on its moral innocuousness—but on the effect it would have on myself. You can never tell how

an inherited strain of accustomed sentiment will assert itself; and my inherited tendencies are not only what might be called virtuous—they are stark with puritanism. I am possibly the embodiment of the revolt of the savage streak on which all humanity is based, and which my people have so long trampled down.

But my chief feeling was one of surprise at the quality of the thing that had made most of the tragedy of all literature.

Yet that was perhaps my disregard of the imitation quality of the world of tangible things. It is not the marble of the Apollo Belvedere that is real to us, but the passion of the artist; and, in life, it is not acts which comprise actuality at all. People and action can only be inflamed by imagination into life, and only live till we choose to forget. We make searchlights of our imagination, our instincts, and our passions, to pass over unknown

places, to disclose the marvel of things hidden from us in the mystery of fact.

On the other side of bread and butter knowledge exists a marvellous world of permitted curiosity. Why should these things be closed to me? I have in myself the possibilities of them all: all literature only mirrors the changing impulses of instinct. Even the laws of Leviticus were framed against things done. No one legislates against the imagination. The Thousand and One Nights glitter gaily, serenely, through things unsaid, unwritable, which were accepted as facts—laughable facts—for the retailing under a July moon.

Yet I don't want to share the flames of Semele as the price of seeing human nature as it is.

FOURTH DAY

THE sea is a glamour of iridescent foam. The ship is surrounded by a whirr of white wings as the gulls hover in flashes; now and then they poise with wings extended, like visions of the Holy Grail.

I suppose we must all serve some altar, and sacrifice ourselves for some uncomprehended power—the Trappists, Devil Worship, the Salvation Army, all to exhaust the unused vitality of men and women; Nature insists on that shudder of energy traversing the world in some way.

Sensuality, the Cloister, Art, they throw mankind bleeding against the bars of sense. We cannot feel to the extent of our desire, enjoy to the depth we know

pleasure exists. We strain and shudder and pant before the possibilities our senses shadow for us. It has all been said. "For now we see as in a glass darkly."

The boundless power religions, creeds, have had over women consists in the promises they all have of a future life.

Our life in reality is so short. Just as women learn the value of living they are reduced to the level of sexlessness. But the grateful creed seduces the mind by the unacknowledged hope of eternal youth, eternal beauty, eternal pleasure.

The churches are warped even into my life. The early Nonconformist church in America, with high, black oak pulpit, and panellings of black oak, behind the seats for the ministers. I have looked up at this, and felt my blood shrivel under the warnings of a physical Hell of fire; and then my eyes in weariness would wander to the

grey tablets on each side of the pulpit, with the Ten Commandments written on them in gold letters. People who could break one of these in actuality were somehow out of the scheme of ordinary creation to me then—red impalpable figures of immortal Sin, figures wavering in a premonition of eternal flame.

On the Pacific Coast that one, white, solitary mountain dominated the river, and the church was near the river—the church, with the new mysteries of lilies and stained windows and gold for the altar. It made a benediction for me when I would pass it, going to Chinatown, to the hall where the occasional musicians from Europe played—where Alf of my romance of cloud played. He would give as encores the things he played for me at my lessons. Those lessons!—the perfume from the bowls of daffodils that filled my music room, the glimpses through the long

windows of the wonder-mountain, the languor of Chopin, the intermittent flame and ice at my heart . . . those biting Chopin waltzes and smother of the Nocturnes . . . Schumann—he taught me enough to translate the complexity of Schumann, not perhaps quite as he wanted. After the Nachtstücke or the Kinderscenen, when the lesson would be over, I would fly to my room, and turn to the Book of Jude, and kneel and read, though my eyes smarted with the tears: "Ye who are tempted with the temptation of your flesh——"

I thought it would be very wrong of me to let him kiss me, I did not intend to marry him—and then, the next Sunday in the church, the majesty of the service would calm down all the half pretence, half real, anguish. I could kneel there openly, while those magnificent prayers were being made—prayers all suited, I felt, to the tragedy of my renunciation.

"And now he who is able to keep you from falling—present you faultless . . ." I have forgotten how it ends, but it was very beautiful, and I felt it keenly. But perhaps Alf's kiss would have saved me from Oscar's. I might not have been so curious.

Then Westminster Abbey. The churches rose in grandeur, in keeping with the extent of my emotional crises. I have no doubt the gods play with us and provide adequate settings for our marionette passions.

I cannot say I voluntarily chose Westminster Abbey as my only church in London, because it was near the House of Commons; but that, and its splendour, its insufferance of anything known there but the climax of emotion, made a background to that phase of my love pose.

"The chapel of St. Faith's is open for

private prayer." I would go and pray to be delivered from my stupendous temptation. I pictured myself in the little dim chapel, as the marvellous music of the evensong service raptured my soul, with tears over my wickedness. I couldn't feel in the least wicked, that's why I wanted to go to St. Faith's and pray, so that I could get some of the suitable and exciting sense of Sin.

But instead my heart blazed a way for itself through the walls; it saw into the palace opposite, the long stone corridors, the stained windows, the men, my lover. And, as a general rule, I went over after my prayers and had tea on the Terrace. The Abbey was so convenient.

FIFTH DAY

I LIKE the roar of the wind against the cabin behind me. I like being safe in this sheltered place. The storm whirls close, but I am as still as though in the clasped centre of a maelstrom. One does not realise the sea till it is seen in this mood, nor the sea's power and the winter of the air meeting in a mist of snow—a Circe who draws near to the waves till they are changed to ice.

It puts in front of the eyes the mood that I love, the unmatched power, the clanging fury, straight from the limits of the world. It is like the violence of ourselves of which I am curious, the great motives, great brains, great crimes, the

wine of the world that has intoxicated humanity to strange abandonments.

And as each one of us is the sum of humanity, crime is part of us; and if we repudiate it, we repudiate a part of our own force. But to break one law implies the mental permission to break them all. It isn't easy, this cult of curiosity!

And now I, who have done one thing called wrong, must try each forbidden thing, against my own unreal point of view—pick them up, one after another, as one would gather the weight of sand in one's hands, to let it slip again through the fingers, in glittering atoms. It is the first real act of my life. I shall have to measure it against the dreams.

But this stripping oneself from scruples is a man's life, and I don't know whether I have a man's strength. For the gaining

of all the joy of life is audacity; requires not brains so much as fearlessness.

I should like not to be afraid of myself, to give the inner thing permission to get for me all the excitement it craves. If I could only burn from existence each weakness of mood, each repugnance, to feel that I had gained all the extreme beauty of the world, the limit of the disclosure of the senses, against and through every barrier and law the world can enact.

The very fact of having no money forces me to adventure. In some moments I am almost glad I have no choice.

If I had been rich, all my inherited blood would have held me in Arctic restraint. I would have had my excesses from Strauss and Velasquez and the East, and lived in frigid contempt of the palate of colour, the scale of blood, the eternal fire that human flesh and blood can give.

But, as it is, I am pushed out of dreams

into reality; I must pirate the colour of life.

I am far too clever to let myself be found out, no matter what thing I may do; and to the excitement of forbidden things I shall have added the amusement of outraging every law made for women, and getting all the advantages our inferred morality brings us. To get all the magnetism of different temperaments, have the money to travel as much as I like, and the humour of painting in my travels by all the extreme incidents of passion; to engrave on my mind palaces and sunsets and the tropics and seas, by the intensity of Nature's climax; to pay one's way by passion; to string the world around like a string of beads—each tremendous city and country the keynote of tremendous things called wrong.

But Sin in this way isn't the act of unlawful things. It is the curiosity of our

own temperament, the deliberate expression of our own tendencies, the welding into an Art of act or incident some raw emotion of the blood. For we castrate our minds to the extent by which we deny our bodies.

SIXTH DAY

THE trouble with Othello and the tragic people of the world is that they take themselves and their sentiments too seriously. Human beings are not worth killing. We can't eat them, and we don't stuff them for our halls; and so the objects of killing them, as far as sensible beings could practise it, are eliminated.

Othello was a beast, and it shows how little we have advanced from the brute pleasure of the savage, that we can go to such a play, and call the strangling of a woman Art.

I remember I tried it once. It was that afternoon when the blankness of usual things was beginning to flow around me again. We stood ready to go, and he had

put my long white boa around my neck, then, smiling at me with sudden meaning, he twisted it a second time about my throat like a chain, a muffler. "Now, when you get home you must lie down till dinner time," he said. The commonplace solicitude, the quiet, the simplicity of it all maddened me. Hadn't I just inverted the world, set the universe at defiance, flung my all to the gods?

I see him yet—his face, as it appeared to me at that moment, his heavy overcoat flung back, his calm, clean-shaven face tense and white, the half smile on his lips. But there were black lines under his eyes, and I felt from him some mood of tragedy that I knew he saw I did not understand.

"I shall certainly kill you some day," I said, choking in the fury of incomprehension; "I think I may as well kill you now." I slipped my hands around his throat under his collar, and dug my fin-

gers into his neck with all my strength. Strangle him? He only kept on smiling, in his ponderous conventionality. I might as well have tried to choke a statue. I dropped my hands. I felt like a frightened savage.

"I am afraid you have hurt your fingers," was all he said; and then, in his superior English way of merely doing the proper thing, he gently kissed the palms of my hands.

The sea-gulls wheel there, above the foamless water, as though they were the vultures of thought, waiting to devour murdered dreams. A cry comes from them now and then, as darkness creeps nearer, bringing no promise of another day.

Love touches the borders of its opposites. A woman gives herself up in ignorance to the first man who possesses

her; and she feels he must make life afterwards seem as newly great as when it had the glamour given by virginity.

There is no hate in Hell deeper than the hate that balances a woman's first surrender of herself.

I can imagine the pleasure of playing the gods to the man who has struck us from our world; to send them reeling into eternities of other unalterable things. What he has taken can only be matched by life.

Still, the uncle of Héloise understood better the shrewd depths of agony hate can give. They are deeper than any grave could reach.

Revenge is the one immortal passion of humanity. It is the passion of the gods—the reserved passion of the gods.

I understand the savage insensate wish to test your full power, to wreak your

complete strength on anyone you hate, and have loved—not doing it hastily, stupidly, but to run the scale of the pleasures they could give you; the excitement, the love, the pallor of waiting moments; and then, when you had learned all they had to give, your last gift to make them the earth of which their brute bodies are made. You transfigured them, they said. Well, you would transfigure them again—a transfiguration that would tip them over the edge of the universe, and leave them only fallen stars to clutch at, with their grasping hands. Hands you have kissed—well, let infinity and corruption have them now!

One may possibly be a factor in some stupendous scheme of cosmic proportion; but, with our limited knowledge of the two eternities that gulf us, of the space that makes our planet a speck in the universe, we are appalled by the impotence of our own lives for our own gain, by the

grotesque humour of our forced service to an unknown end.

We suffer that a world may be inhabited. I wonder if each grain of dust suffers, as it is shovelled and piled and dug, to make the foundations of buildings of men? It is redistributed, reused. In one age on the summit of a mountain; in another, slimed with vermin in dirty cellars; and again it rests in the bed of unfathomable seas. Human dust, human agony, human impotence! But our one marvellous, princely gift is that we die. Life must set us loose at last.

And even difficult and hedged by Nature, as it is, Death is always open to us if Life cuts too hard. Why endure what is only pain, or—worse than active suffering—the knowledge that by our very temperament we are barred from success? To be defeated by yourself, to see

yourself hopelessly dictated to by a trick of the blood, to know yourself all your life at the mercy of your own inexorable impotence to carry out your own desires. What, then, if Fate has not given you what you want, is the use of your attempting to struggle for it? To do so only means the chill of failure, the agony of futile effort.

But it takes some strength, too, some final courage, to turn to Death, since Life we do know—its placid sweetness, if we choose to be satisfied with that, the canopy of clouds on a summer's day across an immaculate sky, the smell of flowers, the sound of the woods when the wind stirs the trees, the white ecstasy of snow and sunlight. These we know, are sure of. It takes some courage to slip out into a blackness and a silence that may be absolute and eternal.

Of nothing else could one have any fear. A God would understand and be more just than any ignorant creed of man imagines.

SEVENTH DAY

HERE in the stern the faint, wistful cry of the gulls comes to me. I too, like them, fly above deep waters, and follow uncertainly strange things from unknown lands.

I wish I could really feel unconsciously, spontaneously. I feel so tired to-day; so physically good. I want to weep and wash the feet of some idol with tears. I want to repent, to kneel for sleepless nights on chill marble floors. I want to do penance, to strike across my shoulders where he touched them, to strike with thongs . . . that is the secret, to have my shoulders touched again.

Yet forbidden things taken for their

own sake mean bestiality, regret about them, weakness.

. . . . .

"Yes, I like you to kiss me," I granted.

"But everything, everything!" he stormed; "it all must be reciprocal."

Reciprocal! A possible thing to the innocent woman. It was like the hook proposing reciprocal sentiments to the fish.

I feel a mental pariah. Shut out from the accustomed ways of thinking, pushed to the edge of chaos.

I hate the world, I hate humanity. I feel no kindred with them, only a sullen revolt against sharing with them the limitations of our humanity.

We know there is Beauty, maddening complete Beauty of matter and sense; but some film of distortion is drawn over our eyes, and we can neither hear, nor know, nor see as we would. It is true that now

we do indeed see through a glass darkly. Oh God, oh love, oh my love!

What a fool I am! That wind, and the roar day after day of the waves, has got on my nerves. There are tears in my eyes. Still, it is an interesting experience to know that I have enough of the usual humanity to cry; but it removes some of the sentiment when I know it is only a matter of the never-ceasing clang of the sea.

Sentiment is a matter of the adjustment of some nervous excitement to some physical condition. What humanity wants is sentiment undiluted by the nerves and undictated to by the body. That would be aping the excitement of the earthquakes and the wantonness of inconsequent winds.

I am irritated by my own seriousness over the thing, all this fear of reading the things I read before, this amused defiance before the propriety of those old maids: I

am breaking myself on the reef that in olden days drowned women in convents. It is a remnant of the old Methodist training. Yet the thing itself was less to me than his first look that made my eyes fall before his. He subdued me then. I could not control my eyes, or the tremor of my blood, if his hand would touch mine; but this feeling now—that hideous hour—that hideous hour——

I could trust him, of course. I would trust my soul in his hands, to place it in those of God—only, Nature has failed, life has failed; we do not get from Love what Love promised. I do not understand; I will not understand.

I do not think I ever want to see him again—other men perhaps, but not him. I had thought Love was so wonderful, and all it means is that! Yet I loved him.

It would remind me like a blow, like a smear across my face, if I saw him, of

all that life fails to give: we loved each other, and it failed. It was so hideously blank, mean, beside what I had expected of the mystery of life.

I am afraid of him. He claims me as a right, and I belong to myself.

The Afternoon.—Our lives are only the unconscious products of what we have sympathetically read or heard or seen. I have found myself insisting brutally on theories that I discover I unrealisingly read years ago, that my eyes saw but hardly understood. The other unknown, rapacious self grasped at it all like some caged creature eager for food, for stimulant; and I, helpless under its will, live out these cloud theories.

This inside thing is the Fate that makes our life. Our body is only some ambiguous figure of our dreams, a carriage for it, a go-cart, a prison van. But only the

rich can make it appear fit to be in the beauty of the world, have the right to keep it alive. Every one else has to prove that right. We have to redeem our creation by genius, by success, by tearing the gift of the world out of the hands of Fate. That compensates for being alive, makes us creators ourselves.

And women—we were not given brains to create, we can never know the triumph of genius, we are only given bodies to people the earth, and gain in the fleshly creation some of the rapture of the gods.

I have no doubt a mother, when the new glory is still on her, feels herself near the Unknown Source of life, and that she is part of the powers of the universe. It probably grows early dim, this ecstasy of giving birth. The woman of many children does not show on her face the illumination that marks men who have brought mental life to the world.

And it is right; the first is often the loathsome, always the unnecessary result of an animal hunger; the latter the fruit of bitter work of revolt, or defiance of the greatest forces we know. It is the passion of Prometheus: a child is only the affirmation of an appetite. Yet it sanctifies women, constitutes their apology to the world.

And at least it is definite; serves an end, however temporary, of mental dedication; does, however feebly, make them one with Nature.

I stand aside and wonder whether they are wiser than I would be in their place—for I have no choice, no sane woman would have an illegitimate child—or whether their sacrifice is the final laugh of the gods at the most pitiful of the things they have made.

For all the torturing analyses, the flowered idealism, the superior sham, what dif-

ference was there between his feeling for me and that of those frankly vermivorous things who breed with as little calculation as a toad?

When all had culminated there was only one thing he asked of me. As for me, I was frankly fond of his kisses, but all the climax was on my part a matter of calculated curiosity and the hallucination of the first time he touched me. But when I knew the reality—was that all that women are to men, that I am to him?—nothing more, nothing more? I am only human, he is only human. I am blinded, assailed by a storm of futilities. Am I always to shiver alone against the eternities, simply a speck of the womb of the cosmos? Have I not eyes to see with, lips to speak? Oh, my love, is that all you want? Is that all Love is?

LAST DAY

THE whole air of the ship is changed to-day, the serenity of the sea is gone, all the mystery of fathomless horizons; the air is already brittle with the pettiness of cities. Everything inexplicable and beloved wants to be put away, it has no place in all this practicality.

Day—the usual greedy, work-filled, light-seared, sucked-for-the-future day—is licking its paws after these night months of dreams. I can almost hear the clang of the trolleys.

But yet—but still—even yet the sea is here; there is yet that tremble under the ship and the moist sweetness of the wind—the mad moist sweetness that tempts to all the follies of our ultimate dreams.

I am afraid; there is no use denying it, and I am tired. I have to play life for any gain I want. I have to stake myself and every fear for some possible benefit that I may dislike if obtained. I can't sit idle, my lap full of the treasures of existence, and have Fate come and barter with me for her gifts. I must instead gamble with the gods. I have only myself, and all the gorgeousness the world has is waiting to be bought.

It strangles me sometimes, this rage against a force that has dragged me into life without my consent, and yet denies the things I think make life worth living.

The very fact of working for a thing, struggling for it, sacrificing the laziness of sunshine for it, strips it of its glamour. If you have to spring up to drag down to you a bunch of grapes, they are certain to lose their bloom in the crushing hold, if

not to break into mushy nastiness in your hand. I shall probably get my bunch of grapes, and shall no doubt just as probably only acquire a mass of useless pulp.

I want to see all the world, I want money, and I want to forget. A woman is a fool who lets one man dominate her life when once he is her lover. History, common sense tells you he will not be wholly true even if mentally faithful to you. Then take his plan of life—live as far as you can his life, and get his unprejudiced point of view.

And I am afraid of what I shall impose on myself, of the experiments I shall make myself make, of the forcing myself into the definite pose, of the rigorous insistence on the complete carrying out of the mental exploit, of the stolen freedom.

And there is no use trying to cover up the fact that what I have given him has dislocated my whole world; turned my

universe upside down; made me afraid to read, to hear, to see, for fear some tremor of remorse or pain would spoil the sunshine for me. It hasn't. I was as strong as myself, was able to carry the weight of the thing I had done and take the benefit of the larger view. But that doesn't alter the fact that it might have paralysed my whole life.

And yet I suppose countless women do the same thing, and continue calmly in their way as though merely they had found a new fashion to dress their hair. It is an enviable temperament that can accept the facts of life, even if given in a slightly unusual manner, with the easy confidence of beings accustomed to realities. I can't; they throttle me with surprise. I hate it. I detest the fact of my being human. I loathe every limitation of existence that makes us the joke of our captors—acci-

dent, crime, mutilation, grief, poverty, death.

If only I were not forced, if everyone were not forced, to go on living and making new experiences. If I could only embower the time, as it were, and sit and remember and know again the music that was played, the suns, the smell of the flowers, the words, the dark glimmer of the river, the trembling of the lights, the stone walls, the icy tremor of the moonlight, the touch of his hand on my bare arm—my cloak flung back—the hiss of my satin skirt on the stones, the oppression of the sun in the park, the far whisper of hushed birds; a pool of red rimming the world in the west, the perfume of the hawthorn: "You ought to read Jane Austen, and get the English view" —Jane Austen!—Oh, my love, I will go back! I love you—I love you!

The institution of regular meals is not only more or less a pleasure, but it is advisable for preserving the sanity of the human race. To feel yourself in the throes of an immortal pain, and to have suddenly presented for your consolation cold tongue and hock and seltzer, is distinctly conducive to a reasonable adjustment to the exigencies of daily life.

I have just had my luncheon, and a luncheon on deck with the sea. The real sea flaming about you is after all, for a moment or two, a thing worth while, worth at least a few hours of pointless breathing to achieve.

I was mad to come away. I could have had the travel, ease, music; but I couldn't have been myself and stayed. It was inexorable. I wanted the knowledge. To have wondered, to have waited, to have felt myself depending more and more on him

for all my groundspring of feeling, would have been the torture of Hell. I would have delivered myself bound over, body and soul, into bondage. I know myself. I am the same as other women. I care for him enough to know that all the false, insidious sentiment of centuries would have at last made me absolutely dependent on him for happiness.

What shall it profit—if one gain the whole world and lose his own soul? The price for my travelling would be too heavy.

I must own myself, be mistress of myself, have my emotions and pleasures ready to be taxed only at my own convenience, to be varied at my own caprice. A laboratory, a gymnasium of emotions. A glass of poetry, a taste of music, a plunge into instinct, the glamour of the sea.

But I recognise all this programme of

variety as only a desperate effort to keep my head from going under.

I am lazy to my heart's core; how much easier to let myself be loved—to go with all the tendencies of blood and training and instinct that call to luxury, quiet, fidelity, love—than to this torturing quest of experiment. But things like this have to be kept at extremities; to relax even for a little while means to slide down towards some bleakness of remorse and regret whose clammy agony I have no intention to feel.

This way I am free from remorse; I might as well regret my height or the colour of my eyes. I make it inextricably Myself, and I will go in my search through Life so far that all individual things will be too hazy, too confused in the general outline to let me regret a charm that is possibly excelled by something near.

But with all the tortuous agony I have gone through, it is only to learn that Art exceeds human passion. I could have loved much better if I had stayed with the dreams that do not need the sense of touch: the ideal Love was generated to conciliate the modesty of women.

Yet love after all is necessary. It is the thing that translates the universe to us, the insistent, omnipresent spell of creation. Though with Art we can say, "I shall love to-night," and listen to music that would ravish angels; yet it does not come to you the next morning, and say that you must stay, that you must hear it again, and again, and again, the same music from the same trumpets and drums.

THIRD PART

LITTLE HUNGARY

LITTLE HUNGARY

Woodlawn, New Jersey, April 9th.—Life seems to have caught its breath, to have moved away from me. And yet I must live, must test it all, go through it all, set all these pines, and the scent of them, and the barbarous sunsets, and the metallic stars to some *motif* of reality—infuse them with life.

The very scarlet flooding of the Jersey marshes at night, the jutting flames from the monstrous chimneys that plume beside the canals, the red infernal sky, the stripes of reflected wet fire—I look at them and know I am blind, blind; that there is some secret I have not yet learned that might let me feel the full beauty of that transfigured burning, the far sky and factory

fires. I strain to catch something that is outside myself, unlived.

New York, the monster that lies at the edge of the sea, and pushes its scaled length towards Europe, is suddenly a skeleton of bare cathedral bones, and the stark ribs of naked buildings open to the sky. It is divested, wind-torn, hollow. The sunsets wave through its openings, the lighted snakes of elevated trains coil about it at night. At night the sky is a dark pall sown with sharp star-points meant to hurt. It is webbed, vast, like the wings of a bat, horror-stricken although the sun is shining.

I feel hushed, baffled, silenced, held over an abyss of decision that will make my life memory a regret—or the actuality of new knowledge. This is the real climax with women; not the things we do but the manner by which we forget them.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

May 12th.—The other night, when his fingers closed on my arm, the sea had engulfed planets: I was held by the fire of the Immortals—I *was* Immortal. There was no death, there wasn't even life. All the universe was burning in corrosive ecstasy.

And it has been only twice; but the other existence lies behind as dry and dead as a crackled, brittle leaf. This was life veined with blood and rounded by palpable flesh—palpable flesh—my arms and throat have yet the great black bruises from his kisses. It is enough to tincture a whole century with love, passion enough to create a universe. I hardly dare separate the memory of it into the different moments out of the great flaming shafts of radiance that intoxicate every sense and are beating around me yet. He did not seem human, it was more than the mere

meeting of man and woman. Life could hardly bear much of such ecstasy.

The minute I came into the drawing-room of the hotel I had a confused sense of the crimson brocade and the gilt-built mirrors, and then of him standing by the white marble pillars of the mantel-piece and fastening the button of one of his gloves. I saw then the face that I had seen in all the centuries since the world began.

We both wanted to get outside the radius of ordinary life. We left the carriage at the edge of the slums and walked. I think the angels from Paradise walk so when they come to earth. I saw the teeming thousands of humanity, the impish children, the filth of the streets, the windows filled by hideous heads sprouting out of these dens for air in the hot May night.

His voice enticed me, led me, seized me, swayed me, mastered me. I had met my master. I was conquered, his voice walled me. I was defenceless, unresisting; I never dreamed of resisting. There was nothing to resist. I was myself, and he had always owned me, always had been my possessor; he had always known I would respond, since the world began.

"It is in the cellar: are you afraid—aren't you afraid I shall murder you for your jewels?" he laughed when we came to Little Hungary. Afraid! I would have followed him into Hell. The flames would be no hotter than the whirring madness that spun the world around us into fire.

We got up at last, he and I together, to the street, which, even though it was a

slum, had the curved serenity of the night sky, the wildness of open air.

But we had not driven far through the empty obscure streets—so obscure to us that we might have been in the midst of a desert—till my relaxed mood—I was at the end of my strength—made me turn and meet his eyes and tremble down, under, not away from his kiss. This was made with the world when life was given from God to man.

Only a moment, and we moved apart—shaken, tumultuous, shocked, with a feeling as of the first swoon of ether that lifts your veins into rivers of light before it transforms you into extinction. The stars slipped over us as we moved, slipped under us, dripped from my hands as he caught my hands and clung over me and begged and whispered and devoured my heart.

"Stay with me, you love me, you love me, trust me!" and I swayed to him, gasp-

ing, as he crushed my lips—my lips that were shaped to his, made for his, formed for him to kiss; and then a carriage passed, and he crushed my face down on his breast so that I would not be seen. "Stay with me, stay with me!" and my "No" was spent under his lips.

He slipped down on his knees beside me, and drew my face down to his. "You have never been kissed like this—stay with me!"

But I couldn't, I couldn't; I loved him so that I denied myself him to gain him.

June 3rd.—I remember the long walks past the pine hills, just as day was passing into night, and the stars were coming out in a blue sky, yet stained with the sunset on the days before I wrote. I was willing that the days in between should pass. I had to grow accustomed to the transfiguration of his kiss before I saw

him again. He made me real, and imprisoned my heart bar after bar of the minutes we were together and locked by his last kiss.

It flashed out into life in the midst of May, part of the perfume and wind and stars of the world. All the dreams I surmised of eternity have waved over me in one thunderous night. I have got the best out of life that life can give. I was satisfied with the measure of the hour; the future did not exist, there had been no past.

We could see the trees in the square from the deep windows of the room, the stars hung like pendants of pink rubies in the luminous air. There was no wind, the transparent green leaves were motionless, and between the grass and the sky pierced the molten shaft of electric light

moving and feeling the darkness with its sharp edges.

He stormed at me, battled with me, laughed at me, struggled with me; I was bewildered, tired, broken. I burst out crying, and flung my arms on the table and buried my face in my arms.

No matter what life could do or deny, it cannot take these hours from me; they are myself, marked on my soul; are my soul. It is the triumph of the immortal; I have been immortal; I have been in the eternal fountains. He has made me alive.

THE HOUSE

New York.—I had to keep myself at the apex of feeling, even though it meant stepping from mountain top to mountain top over unnameable gorges.

The heat here subdues you, relaxes you, maddens you to strange things. Tides of ourselves, we welter out on black seas, drink from hidden sources, find shade in secret groves of unknown trees. It wraps you in a veil, you move forward blindly through paths—any path away from the feeling of it. And we are the gate to everything. The gate to everything—ourselves; and I had thought life was the mystery, the thing to be discovered. No matter how strange and fearful a thing we may do, it becomes at once, it is, only

the expression of our own minds; is natural, usual, a commonplace of emotion. I think our association of mystery with the forces of Nature is only our dissatisfaction with our own powers.

Because this, the climax of horror, the altitude of abomination for women, seems to me in reality only the lazy translation of an Arabian fantasy, a Balzac Conte Drolatique, a Rabelaisian mood put into flesh.

The mood of a summer afternoon when the hammock yields to you, and the perfume of the wallflowers and the lilies subdues you. An afternoon when you swing between the trees, and see the fields yellow, warm, swelling in the golden mist; are held by the languid calls of the birds and the vague scent of the coming night.

It has, too, all the humour of the scientific sneer and disclosure. One can watch the worlds in the making as it were, de-

void of the walls of sham, naked and unafraid. There is no pretence, no affectation, no cant about the soul. It is only "I want you," and creation has said its uttermost.

Poetry, the House of Life, each satin phrase, each catch of the breath at a "thou" of the "solstice," the whine of music, the blurred dissatisfaction of painting, are set simple, and washed of the birth-stain of unreal desire in the clear light of untempered humanity. It expresses itself variously, it has its gradations, its beauties, and its ugliness; but the fact, the undiluted brutal dominating fact, is there undefiled. Even the Devil would be blackened if he pretended to want only one individual in his Hell.

I am not shocked, I am not disgusted, I am only intensely interested and occasionally amused. Of course, neither the

men nor women are quite real to me, they flicker around me like the disclosed dances of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

They recognise me as of another world. Yet it is much the same luxury, the same costly dresses, the same heady scent of flowers and wine.

I would walk over fire to get what I wanted, and so I stake myself for what I want. I do not intend to be found out, and whatever flesh and blood I have belongs to myself. I shall do what I like with it, it is my only bank account.

If I went into a Zoo, and everything commenced to talk, or if a dream should persist into the day, it could not seem more fictitious than this. I trail my long dress through the long rooms and smile at myself curiously, admiringly, in the long mirrors. It is unquestionably brave, it has taken overwhelming courage to come here. But how shudderingly unnatural

it seems to use the inherited pluck of fighting men to face the bathos of this! But I must use all I am to conquer, to win; even though I may throw it away after, let it fall through my hands like drops of water. To have power, to see all the glory the world has, to be able to buy all its beauty, to have the power to destroy what I may hate.

Opal Pendant.—This morning at four o'clock the drawing-room seemed close and heavy, the air was full of the smell of champagne and the odour of the bowl of big pink roses fading in the heat. Both the lace and the silk curtains were drawn across the windows and all the lights were blazing. Then Billie went to one of the windows and dragged back the curtains. "The rosy-fingered," he laughed, "the rosy-fingered is almost here"; and then he came and begged me to go with him to

meet the rosy-fingered—there—at four in the morning. The idea struck me.

His motor was waiting at the door, so I went with him to the park. The flowers and shrubs and trees were raising themselves under the tingling sweetness of new day, the world was opening out and stretching up its arms to the coming light.

Squirrels would sometimes jump across the path, and once a bat whirred out of the shadow of a pine, and drifted down into the deeper darkness of a gorge on the other side of our way.

Billie showed me a little hill we had to go down, and then something was disclosed, the opening of a veil of leaves, to show a memory, a desire, a vision of the Orient. A tiny lake covered by the wide leaves of the lotus, fringed by their uneven stalks, and studded by the immaculate huge lilies that held the air in their fragrance. Great lilies, that made the barge

of Cleopatra pause, that led to the land of dreams. The sky at first was weak, you might think, before the desire of the sun, and then it flushed, lightened, wavered, and turned to tremulous radiance in the glamour of the completed dawn. The light startled a crane in the reeds of the furthest bank, and it started up with a discordant cry, and, with its pointed wings stretched out, flew straight across the lotus lake.

"The Lotus-eaters—the world forgotten!" I cried to Billie, and he caught my hands and tried to kiss them; but, as far as I was concerned, Billie didn't exist for me. A hand had crept into my mind and closed on it with talons—the Orient—the smell of the pungent mystery of the East, the yellow skies, the spiked trees and entangled flowers. I must have the Orient, must inhale the secret of its untempered colour, black and gold leaf and Imperial

yellow, the tortuous ivories, the oblique reserve, the domination of the white blood.

Nine o'clock p.m.—This life has not changed me, it has only brought into being traits of me that otherwise would have lain dormant.

I gird myself in quiet for fear I shall betray the fact that I am amused. I drop my eyes to conceal the springing of life that answers from me here, as to the swaying with the roulette wheel at Monte Carlo. Here are the beginnings of all ultimate passions, finalities, the limits of humanity. Strange awful things and secrets creep through it—the inversion of Byblis, the caricature of Sappho, queer laughs like the cackle of some of the light monstrous stories of the Arabian Nights; the opal effervescence of drugs, the thick pink petalled flowers, the apes; the humanity in me chuckles and delights that if

it is different, it at least understands, sees it, reads it, like the pages of a Persian book—set too, in silken walls, and under gilt cornices, before the limpid crystal of wide mirrors. It is life; I am life; I see it all. Nothing is hidden. I see the soul of humanity, squeezed like a sponge, and the drops of its animating blaze trickle out—not viscous or black, but red, healthy, vital.

Either your humanity is greater than the things it is capable of, or they are greater than you.

Friday.—He was physically a fine thing, though not the type I like at all. In the first place, I detest men with a moustache, even though it is small and modern, and he was so carnally common, for all his being the President of an island in the Caribbean. Hidalgo blood vitalised

by pure Indian. The Indian in him crisped his hair, brutalised his neck.

Yet his exquisite manner was like the mood of a Spanish painting. It was absolutely simple, there was no shadow of affectation in it, but the walls changed to colonnades, and everything that was said seemed to be an echo from Castilian palaces.

Still, I am utterly a thing of my country, of my race, of my day, cold, curious, super-civilised; I looked at him across a mist, a blood instinct, of raw emotion, tempered though it was in him by all his inherited mental craft of ancient centuries.

He made me feel my hair fairer, my body thinner, my pale mauve dress more ethereal. I smoothed the palms of my hands softly against the gilt arms of my chair and watched his face as he talked. It was not the beast of the tiger, it was the beast of the bull, this thing that looked

at me, who was speaking—half in French, half in English—of Madrid, of Buenos Ayres, of D'Annunzio, and bull-fights, and Satanism.

"I want to feel everything, know everything, do everything—yes, even the blood and pain and the abomination, feel every passion a man can feel."

They sounded grotesque from a man—these phrases I have so often used myself.

And I was the new emotion he wanted to know—I with the fair hair and the thin body and the ethereal mauve dress; flesh iced by a caustic mind. Oh, yes, I knew all this, felt all this, as I smoothed the palms of my hands against the gilt and watched his eyes grow bloodshot and wide.

It amused me, this thing of hunger, the Indian blood that would strike me down where I was, the Spanish gentleman whose very voice was homage.

How far dared I go? There was no

point in making him drink champagne till he grovelled with all the absurdity of the human beast undisguised; he was too much accustomed to it in excess. I would be far too tired by that time to get any amusement out of it. Could I trust to his breeding to hold down the race that made the glint of red in his eyes, that shook his hands and made them burn like ice? If I just let him talk and kiss me—yes, I would let him kiss me, he was too much a brute not to make that a thing I would like—to the very limit of final action. And then to stop, and see him suffer! Could I mentally quote from him: "See everything, even the pain and the abomination." I smiled, and held out my hands to him, and he came and knelt in front of my chair and kissed first one hand and then the other, and muttered into them, "I do not know what to say; I am in your hands, everything—all I am——"

It was a beautiful scene. It only wanted violins playing cadenzas in C sharp minor.

Cheque on Munroe's: Silenus, Priapus —more, perhaps, because his hair was that peculiar iron grey that is vibrant with vigour, his face ruddy, his body heavy as though it had always ridden on flower-harnessed asses.

He charmed me when he first commenced to talk of China. I curled up at the end of the window divan, scrunched cushions behind me, and let my imagination wanton around all the fire-words he was using—the Bund, Palanquin, Jinrikshaw, the Bubbling Wells, Buddha, the yellow temples, Yamen, Junk, Typhoons, Singapore, Polo—the air dimmed and formed into clouds of musk and spices. I saw the jeer on yellow faces, and heard the clamour of obscure tongues, saw the

waving panels of red and yellow with the satanic Chinese marks swaying and clinking from the windows of narrow pit-like streets;—saw the herds of strange blood and form clattering by on their straw-bound feet through the filth of temple-crowned towns.

The smell of the Orient, streaked with sulphur burnt over by the sun, beaten by monsoons, seething with the secrets of unknown birth; lacquered, embroidered, rouged, enamelled—I heard the tinkle of its jade and saw closed doors of teak wood.

When we were alone we had cigarettes he had brought himself from Cairo, and I leaned back and watched the smoke curl into rings that floated, I thought, down the dim aisles of ancient trees leading to the forbidden doors of closed temples.

He liked to talk, I liked to listen. We

were both of us slaves to the same master —the call of the East. His voice seemed to sound for me the murmur of a familiar worship. His strong, brutal, crafty face, the full lips and dominating eyes, I understood and yielded to unresistingly, because he was as much in thrall as I to the dream, the visions, the sense of uncomprehended things.

When he slipped down on his knees beside me, and drew my face over to his lips, I did not think of refusing; it seemed part of the ritual to a long-acknowledged faith. Why should I resist? We both of us granted something stronger, an attraction deeper, a fascination more intense than the human sense could satisfy. It was only the symbol of the less for the greater. He kissed me as I, in thought, clambered up the steps of some difficult shrine to waste touch on the vapour of its incense.

NEW JERSEY

Woodlawn.—When I wakened this morning the pungent smell of burning leaves was creeping into my room through the crevices of the curtains, with the sunshine.

The air tingled when I threw the shutters open as though it had dissolved from crystals of excitement. The gardener was raking together great heaps of dead leaves and setting fire to them on the lawn, the fox-terriers were tearing around in insane concern and barking deliriously. I flung myself back on the bed, and let the air, the sun, sweep over me, and flutter the magazines on the table and ripple all the frills on the soft white curtains. It was sanctuary.

I raised myself on my elbow to see myself in the glass. A serious face and serious eyes, fair hair pushed back from an absurdly good forehead for a woman. There was nothing in the face that would tell.

I leaned back on the pillows raptured by the purity of the room, the outside sweetness of the smell of burning leaves—the essence of the forest consuming in the chilled air.

Through it all I had been conscious, had set every breath since I wakened to the rhythm of the Bach fugue that some one was playing below. Vancouver and Dresden and London were all part of this Fugue and Prelude in C major, the expectation of the audience, the step into cloudland, the roaring applause as the visions tinkled back into silence. The notes staccatoed around me, and held me in a clinking net. A net filled with wood

perfume and the touch of white smooth pillows, their undisturbed lace frills, the immaculate smooth-drawn bed, the relief of gold cool sunshine after the deep unbroken sleep of night.

These are weeks interspersed with music and the foam-caught shreds of chrysanthemums, earth perfume, filaments of mauve and bronze and white, the very white and texture that spray back from the touch of the ship through the waves at sea. Long walks through the radiant woods showing to the sun all the colour they have stolen from his warmth, the shrill sweet yelp of the darting fox-terriers racing with me, leaping at me, circling me, and when I sink down under some tree, laughing and tired, smothering my hands in the caresses from their thin red tongues.

I am free from the revelation of human

things. I am supremely happy to be alone with myself, and the thrilling of the autumn air, the dogs, and the music.

Max comes and plays too sometimes, and sings. The drawing-room where the cool sea-coloured faded silks blend into the hushing twilight, the transparent curtains disclosing the vines and trees outside, the fragile tall glasses holding the cloud-broken chrysanthemums.

When I am lying back listening to him, all the faint sheltering mists of dawn and twilight, of sea breath, creep around me, and still me in their eternal quiet.

His voice is so pure, so young, so only touched by fervour, by the very quality of its beauty. Liza Lehmann's Persian Garden—"Myself when young did eagerly frequent"—the great arpeggioed chords ring gorgeous and clarion, but formed like tinted tulips, not made for

touch, or to touch with perfume. They spread out in waves of colour, they lift up cup after cup of dew-washed amethyst and rose and pallor.

THE HOUSE

New York, Diamond Crescent.—I see him as he half turned to me from the bureau, winding his watch. His wide-brimmed sailor hat was tipped back, showing the heavy black curls—not hyacinthine, as I had said. He was smiling up at me from under the brim of his eyelashes, the straight, firm lips parting over the even white teeth. I noticed that his belt was heavy leather. The light caught the flash of the diamond on each side of the white sapphire on the little finger of his right hand.

The floor swayed under me as I dragged the silk and lace of my frock, with purposed noise, over the rugs, and flung, with a careful thought of its re-

pressed beauty, the pale green brocade lining of my long cloak open on the top of the divan. I wanted the sense of its beauty to help me. I wanted the protection of my white ostrich boa, that still trailed over my shoulder. I wanted everything in the world, but the sense of the shutting door that paused in an eternity of waiting instant till the servant softly closed it. That other night with him was billowing back to me in waves of soft suffocating oblivion, of forgetfulness, of enthralment. I was afraid—afraid of myself, afraid of him, afraid of the mystery, the ecstasy of the moment.

I felt, in shuddering pangs of understanding, the simplicity of our meeting. The sham, the pretence, the babbling intellectuality with the others was out of place, impossible now. I was understood, computed at my true level.

Even here Jack Baird's extremes are

unique. But though it is just the kind of thing that I might have thought would interest me, yet the sinister regularity of his coming, the entire lack of emotion or excitement in the habit of these incidents, takes away from it all life and colour. Even vice, once a habit, is conventional and stupid. He was merely degenerate. There was no more avidity in all these excesses than in the slightest action of more healthy people. It interested me as little as would the lewdness of a monkey.

Yet last night, after Peter left, I felt I had been shaken out of my calm. I had to get some outside thing to bring me back to my speculative curiosity. I was still shaking from his dominant, "You know you care—you know you care!" I sent him away; but still to think that he should even suppose for a moment I cared, infuriated me. Because I do. You beautiful calm monster! You stupid thing of

polo and the stock exchange! You manage me as you would manage an uncertain thoroughbred, and men who understand horses are the men who understand women.

To see a horse stand on its hind legs, and go sideways at a gate, one would naturally infer it had some objection to going through. But those who really know are aware that these evolutions are merely an embellishment of entrance. And on our side we only ask from a man just about the same amount of intelligence that he requires to play polo well —and physique, you Mercury of the Vatican come to life!

"I could break your little spine across my knee"; and he throws me from hand to hand, and never leaves a bruise, though my skin turns black if the maid rasps my shoulder in fastening my frock.

I sent in my conditions to Jack, though,

first, and they were clamorously accepted —"Only come"!

It was now two in the morning, and Jack had been drinking alone since eleven the night before.

Jack stood, big, ponderous, and fair beside the table, looking like a well-bred acrobat in the tightly-stretched pink silk.

I felt like the champagne; I felt like the cigarettes.

I took the glass, shaped like a lily with its bubbling excitement, from Jack, and curled up at the end of the divan and scowled at him. Fair men are always so affectionate. I detest affection.

"Do you know of anything interesting?" I asked. "I have only heard of you as being quite the most dissipated man who comes to the house. Have you anything worth while about you at all?"

He smiled. "Do they say that of me?

Perhaps I can prove to you I am not so bad——"

I drew away the fold of my train from his hands. "No, talk," I interrupted; "I want to be amused. If you can tell me anything exciting I shall stay; if not, I go as soon as I finish my cigarette."

He looked at me with lifted eyebrows. "You want to be amused, to know something new, something different? I too have heard about you, you know."

I shook the ashes off my cigarette placidly. "No doubt, I have an invincible curiosity about everything."

He laughed and bit his lips. It's remarkable how much you can say and yet keep that stone wall around yourself. He did not dare to stir.

He talked on and on. I just felt myself vampiring the vitality out of him—fine brute that he is—as I watched the black lines deepen under his eyes and his face

flame suddenly till the veins swelled or turned white. The attendant came and went silently, with freshly cooled wine, and the dawn was showing like a chink of green ice in a crevice of raised lace at the window, when I heard one sentence shiver through the veil of smoke—"But that was the year I fought in the Rebellion in Canada."

My cigarette dropped from my fingers to the floor. "You served—in Canada! But you belong—here."

"Well," he said indolently, "I imagine you do the same. I think you told me, after I had, with a good deal of labour, elicited some information about your birthplace, that you were born in New York."

"Exactly, Vita Nuova, Inferno, and all the rest of it. Ever read Dante, Jackie? Longfellow's translation's rotten." I glanced at him, feeling like a wolf holding

a nosegay over its fangs. If I had been drinking champagne, and it ever occurred to me that I would like to murder anyone, I don't think I would let any ulterior considerations stand in the way of permitting myself the satisfaction I desired. "But go on," I added, pulling out another cigarette, "tell me how you deserted these United States for—the Nation to the North."

"Are you a Canadian?" Jack was taking risks. It doesn't do to make people themselves.

"I told you that I am a citizen of the United States, born in New York, made of the world here—more or less." It is a thing out of thought that I should sully my country by either naming it or claiming it in this place. It also pleases me—under the circumstances—to call myself a citizen of the United States.

"Well, if you are not a Canadian, the

fact seems to remarkably alter you." He flung his head back on his folded arms. "You look for the first time as though you could feel, as though you could love —or hate." This time it was Jack who was scowling at me.

"Never mind, Jack," I laughed. "Wait, I want some more wine. No, don't get up; I want to get it myself. I am restless. I like doing it. I will give you some for yourself." I poured it out. It seemed to me it was some oblation or potion.

The rivers, the mountains! The wonder of Canada was flooding before me, the air tinkled with the shiver of pine trees. I bent over him with the glass: "Tell me all; tell me everything, everything you heard, felt, saw."

"Oh, I just got in at the end. I was educated at M'Gill, you know; and when I went over that year all the fellows were in a blaze, and so I tried and—got in."

He paused. "I didn't chance to be where there happened much to tell"—he was looking at me steadily, his big chest rising and falling—"only, when he was taken prisoner, our regiment was the guard for Louis Riel."

"Yes," I breathed. This was my country. Louis Riel: the traitor Riel. Suddenly my soul, who sneers at one side of the room and only watches me in all I do, leaped into myself. I trembled with the shock. "Go on," I stammered. "You saw him—was he young, handsome, old, ugly?" I stretched myself out full length at the foot of the divan, and propped up my head in my hands.

Jack's voice had changed. "No, he was an ugly cur, dark and little—about fifty."

"He was ugly and little and old"—I licked up the words. "How did he act? Was he—brave?"

"Brave? No; he carried his sixty-four

pound shot in his hands and cried." His eyes had become luminous looking into the distance. "The boys would pretend to take shots at him, and he would try to—run."

I crept a little nearer—"They only pretended."

"Oh, yes, he was such a damned coward, one couldn't resist baiting him. And then they hate—you Canadians."

I let the word go. "And the end?"

"Yes, the end. I was there then." Then after a minute, "I have told you all. A man doesn't see these things twice in a life. They are not things one likes to go through a second time."

But I crept nearer, tense, all muscle, every nerve silenced, only devouring the meaning out of his eyes, eating the words out of his mouth. "No, you have not told me all."

He pushed back the hair from his fore-

head. "The word came from Ottawa that night"—I felt as though I were racking the sentences out of him—"that her Majesty's Canadian Government ordered that—Louis Riel was to be hanged by the neck, until dead, at eight the next morning."

"Yes."

"But I have brought you down to the very moment." His eyes looked at me almost with fear.

"I would have pulled the rope myself," I said steadily; "and I would have throttled the life out of him, gloried in his agony. I who would shudder with grief at the pain of a fly."

"And then the next morning—there is nothing more—he was—afraid—there is nothing more." I laid my hand on Jack's knee. "Then—yes—but to see a man die. I closed my eyes—but still I thought it was my duty to—look—I saw—it." He

could say no more. I could ask no more. . . . Of course, I paid Jack the price he asked for his story; but I don't wonder that even here his reputation is distinctive.

Monday.—How ridiculous the accepted view of life is—how pitiful, how absurd! I was looking over a magazine to-day that is supposed to be very superior, and found some chapters of a very female story.

She says, "When you kneeled at me, and called me all the goddess names"—and only a couple of nights ago he kneeled to me—where—and called me all the names love knows. Love knows no other names.

After this person in the story is married, her husband goes to town for a few hours, and she sends notes to him every little while, saying, "How he will teach her how to love, that every month will be their bridal month"—she was evidently

rather interested; that she "wants to be everything he wants"—he is evidently rather experienced.

And this kind of thing is considered by the average feminine public sacredly matrimonial; or if a shuddering aside is permitted, the awful red glare from some passion for which the accommodating woman is supposed to sacrifice the world. And all the same words and adorations and honours are given in fast houses every night to women men have only known an hour. Other women do not understand.

We have loved again and again, fresh love, new kisses, as hard, as real, as any that part the lips of a bride; but we know that it is a Renaissance of each new night, that these things die with the dawn to be reborn in any flame of responsive eyes.

We lose the faith of the quality of love. If women lead the lives they are supposed to lead, we do only and honestly love but

one man, because but one man possesses us; but men, in the ratio of their brains and habit, love many women.

And poetry has given us our part—to weep. But why is not one woman so superb that she can be sufficient for ever to a man?

However, as a matter of fact, I would get awfully tired of only one man myself.

November.—The world is made of grey slime. I am sick of being clay for the gods.

It rains all day, and the wind beats up the mud into diseased pools.

The very sight of a glass of champagne nauseates me; when any one touches me I look down to see if my flesh has risen into bubbles of poison.

I am tired—God, but I am tired! The self I drag around is rebelling, it is diffi-

cult to make it obey me now. I whine down each time I wake, in anticipation of what it will have to bear in the next space of being awake. I will not permit any kisses on my lips. I kept that apart. Surely I can assume some right over myself against that mind monster that grinds me down to get the money for—what? I have almost forgotten for what—Europe, revenge—revenge, why should I revenge? —the East. What folly it is, what consummate folly it all is! I am now almost too weak to break loose, to get free from myself. I am afraid, I have stretched my will like a piece of elastic. I have stretched it in front of my very eyes. If it should break and snap back?

NEW JERSEY

Woodlawn.—In the long slumberous days in bed after the operation, I loved the stillness, the isolation, the utter rest, the darkened room, the low distinct voices of the nurses saying only necessary things. It seemed natural to be fed, natural to be lifted, to be bathed, to sleep from eight to eight. I would open my eyes to see the nurses show me fresh flowers each day, and then close them to that exquisite unthinking torpor, open them again to see one of them sitting in just a glint of light from one side of the curtain while she endlessly embroidered rosebuds on a linen cloth. To embroider rosebuds; what an existence of euthanasia!

Then the doctor would come and hurt

me, and I would struggle for a while and then faint. I bore pain very badly, they said, for a woman with such a magnificent physique and constitution. They seemed to consider that the sole advantage to a woman of a fine physique was her ability to bear pain; they seemed to think it was natural and right for a woman to bear pain; whereas I fainted because of my impotent rage at the gods that made pain possible. For I think physical pain a personal insult from the gods not to be borne, very rarely to be borne—to curse us with life, and then to make us suffer. Every breath of agony was another blow straight from the invisible torturer of creation; and I was powerless to hit back.

This illness seems a backwater of the fictional virtues. Two doctors and two nurses all in the secret, all stolidly and unanimously proclaiming to the small self-

important suburban world that I had happened to have a slight accident which they found later had brought on unforeseen complications.

It may, of course, be professional secrecy, and it's certainly what I demand; but I am tempted to think it is rather on account of the fact that they would lose their big fees and their big wages if they told. So I am safe—money can always buy respectability; it buys for me now chastity and maidenhood.

Of course, my money is all going through this illness like sand through a sieve; I shall start again pauperised as before, but this time with a hideous handicap. I feel so broken and unmanageable. My nerve is there. I am mentally ready for anything still, but the thing I fight with is helpless to answer me. My body seems to myself like a cruelly hurt dog that tries to answer to a call but only

quivers through its limbs and raises the flicker of an eyelash in anguished impotence. My body is useless to me now for a while. I shall have to scheme and think. It all rests on my mind—my miserable mind.

If I cannot revenge myself on the gods I can revenge myself on society. They come and see me, these queer small people of another world, the petrified inflated world of puddle positions, the world of suburban golf clubs and smug At Homes and club women.

They are very kind. They bring me exquisite flowers, they send me baskets of out-of-season fruit, their carriages are always at the disposal of myself and my nurse.

I receive them, critical and pallid, in voluminous pink, my comprehending fox-terrier snuggled in some cushions beside

me, my nurse sitting on one side embroidering pink rosebuds on linen. I want her there to turn them out, with the divine prerogative of the sick-room, when I get bored. Why can't one always keep a trained nurse to dispose of people when one is bored?

I have a barricade beside me of the pink azaleas. I don't want any of them to draw their chairs too close, to take my hands, or, unthinkable horror, to attempt to kiss me. Sentiment always nauseates me; and these women, weighing one hundred and nineteen or two hundred and nineteen pounds, are very unkissable. They are good, of course, but you can't kiss virtue; that's why it is virtue—and unkissed.

How bored I do get! They cluster around the fact of my operation like flies. Being unmarried allows me to be blandly non-committal; and, of course, married

women—women with a husband—are always grotesquely mysterious.

What do they know about men? But they come and buzz around me, and I see nothing but the fact that they are married women, and I am not, and that they generally have no figure, and I have . . . and if they only knew that my unseen, unborn, unformed child had been carried through the mists of ether in this very room!

I finger the ears of the fox-terrier while Mrs. Denison talks of her baby. I remember the story of Socrates and Diotima—and the hedge. I feel a hysterical longing to laugh, and turn my face to the nurse. She understands; and in a few minutes she and I are alone, and I am trembling into spasms of nervousness.

I could imagine the catastrophic moment if by any impossible chance they dis-

covered the truth. I—who have been one of the professional outcasts of the race.

But yet the absurdity of calling fast women all the contemptuous names that language affords! I remember the life as I have seen it: the men who come cringing with lust; the women who, with cool common sense, make a universal demand serve as a financial asset.

And at least in the one vital decision that every man and woman has to make, fast women are clean of the sin that makes a mockery of most of the virtuous; the penurious marriages, the squalid marriages, with their ill-fed, diseased, ill-made children, who pave the cities with pain.

They know the awful possibilities of life, and life is no boon to thrust on part of your flesh unless you can give it all that the world holds of material and mental good.

For the most stupendous crime of humanity is to bring a human being into the world when there is no prospect of its having the easiest way the penalty of life allows us. Without the way made as nearly broad and smooth as possible for the unborn helpless creature's feet, it is the cruelty of brainless brutes to launch this thing, who should be above all things loved, into the prison of human life.

I detest doctors who look on suffering with their air of urbane, intelligent interest.

"Well, how can you stand it? can't you see I'm suffering?" I would snarl at my doctor.

"I am helpless—helpless," he would say; and then I would tell the nurse to leave the room, and leave me alone, and let me suffer without any eyes to see me. You can let yourself go then, rip your

whole soul in pieces, and lie broken for the gods to rejoice over, but only when there is no one human to see.

Pain degrades, brutalises; there is no doubt about it. I have lost some keen edge to my interest in this loathsome illness, this occasional stabbing suffering. You are simply drained of mind and only left your nerves to tell you how much the body can endure without losing consciousness. Only a fool would associate anything noble, elevating, with that kind of bestial drawing of breath. What insufferable drivel is the talk about pain borne with noble fortitude! a dog or a horse will bear pain without squealing when they want to; and anyway, what is the use of squealing? The heavens are very far away, and nothing that hears can help. A dose of morphia or a cone of ether is about the only celestial element in an ill-

ness. I hate sick people; they are less than human. Oh, yes, I know I am sick myself, and am waited on faithfully day and night; but they are paid for it, well paid for it, in good glittering gold.

Sometimes as I lie here at the wide window overlooking the hills I feel that the only things important are the perfume of new budding trees, the opening smell of the earth, the winds, the sea, the changing sky, these and Art, the mystery, the inscrutable face of Art through its veil of our senses. These are the things that make life. Everything we feel is only a step nearer, a light to see that face, to interpret closer that ecstasy of Nature.

People have been sending me such a lot of new books while I have been ill, that this afternoon I asked the nurse to pile them up beside me so that I could glance into them. I couldn't be bothered read-

ing that kind of thing, still I could look through them enough to be able to babble politely over their titles.

But after the third they have left me with my hands like ice and my teeth chattering with rage. The false view, the distorted sentiment, the lack of experience, the imitation passion, the imitation immorality: lies that are only insults to humanity.

These stories are not about human beings, they are about brutes—the annals of the kennels. Do we want to read of how the fox-terrier bitch had puppies with curly hair? We might as well read that as books modelled on *The Scarlet Letter* and *Adam Bede*. The verbal hallucinations of people of more or less quite blameless lives. Situations that are merely trash to the sensualist who has seen life naked. Books can tell of deliberate vice or the rankest sensuality, every variation

of sex and instinct. We can laugh at that, or our nerves can shiver over it, but we do not want to hear how the baboon dragged the ape down the cocoanut tree; how, as they phrase it, "in a moment of weakness, Nature triumphed."

I hold no brief for men, but I object to seeing books stained with statements that do not exist in real life.

* * * * *

The nurse came in and found me gibbering over the paper and pencil and the books, and took them all away from me, and scolded me, and knew it had brought back the pain in my side again, and opened the window to let the wind from the pine hills blow over me, and bathed my flaming face in scented water, and held steadying nerve stuff in a glass against my clinking teeth. How beautifully she soothed me!—these wonderful nurses!—told me "yes," it was lies—no

one was unhappy—it was all lies; and all the time she was lifting away the crushed cushions, and putting cool, smooth pillows in their place, and bringing me flowers from the next room. She does not allow many flowers to stay here to take up the air, but now she brought me the bowl of hyacinths, and the great jar of heavy scented white lilies that Max sends me. She knows I love them, that they rest me.

She looked so pure, so calm, with the delicate white cap on her dark hair, her immaculate white piqué dress, the fine snowy fichu and apron and cuffs. She is virgin, absolutely virgin. The sense of her utter chastity is as refreshing to a woman of my temperament and life as the rectitude of white marble or the austere frescos of mediæval saints.

NEW YORK

"The Woman's Salon," May.—I do not know whether I shall be able to carry it through, but it doesn't at least ask any personal spending of myself, only physical strength for the daily strain and some simulated appearance of intelligence.

I shall have to take my mind out of its ghoul precincts, and bring it into a crowded room to play some parlour tricks. It is like a terrier torn away from burrowing for its beloved rat, and told to sit on a chair with a lump of sugar on its nose. But I want my lump of sugar. I want Europe, and it means Europe. A free trip, and a sufficiently unexpected manner of descent.

To be the Editor of the London edition

of *The Woman's Salon!* The smug success of the thing in relation to my instability will have the carrying weight of a whole trunkful of Paris frocks. I—Editor! I see the smile around Oscar's mouth, the patronising flicker of his eyebrows at the idea. I who have the general steadiness and business ability of a flying machine!

The whole thing is an absurd fluke; but the managing editor of the Salon Company is Irish, and with my Irish blood I am able to wheedle and transfix him with the idea that my occasionally intense manner means reserves of intellect ready to burst on the magazine world.

I don't blame him in the least. Most people think I am clever; but it's only myself that understands that it is not the things I know but the things I care for that make what I do significant.

When I was talking to Kelly about the advisability of retaining a department on tatting, my whole soul, the cold sweat of unnamed agony, was clawing at his eyes and mouth to blind him, to make him think I was sincere. Department on Tatting! and any woman who would tat could be very sensibly hung up in her own threads. The Culinary Photographs—and the care that gives seasonable and not too expensive dainties, "but with a little touch of the unusual." A little touch of the unusual! Yes, according to my private views of the readers of the magazine, I would suggest in everything a dash of prussic acid.

But I smiled and comprehended, and my voice coloured as my eyes dilated, and I cooed and comprehended till my fingernails had dug through the thickness of kid into the palm of my hand. Kelly informed me sweetly that he approved of

temperament; "it gave motives of enthusiasm that would be beneficial to the Company's Work."

"We are like one great family," he would observe, looking around complacently over the dun blank acre-long loft with its stooping-shouldered, yellow-faced mass of mediocrities; "each in their way, however small, give their best to the Paper."

I murmured something about feeling the incomparable felicity of such a consummation, and added slowly, with my best Irish smile, "that I too would give my best." I glanced out of the dusty window at the blank grey wall beyond, and for some reason unfelt by myself my eyes slowly filled with tears. Unbusinesslike as I am, my physical weakness disgusted me; but the Celt laps up emotion with the eagerness of all the rest of the cat tribe, and Kelly only assured me raptur-

ously that all his knowledge and experience were at my disposal—that he was so glad for the Company—what an inspiration to the London office!

I breathe morals, I radiate an air of inspired propriety, and so I go into New York to the *Salon* building each day to learn all the individual methods of the *Salon* Company.

The physical weariness of it beats me from head to foot—the race to catch the 8.10 train in the morning, the noisy trolley spurting through the dirty slum streets, the street itself full of packing-cases and bristling with straw under a sun that strikes you with a blow at half-past nine in the morning. And the puling insignificances that through the day I must treat as being of such monster importance. I grow insanely tired when they worry me over the English spelling of a word. I don't care how anything is spelled.

What does spelling matter anyway, as long as one understands? Spelling is dogs' work.

Then every now and then that stab through my flesh warns me of how I was beaten in the last set of the game—not quite beaten. I learned a few tricks from you, Fate; I understand you better now.

It is a little world, this business, like all other worlds—a little, mean, shuffling, jealous world. The cataclysmic universal tragedy if some bit of type or the fraction of a measurement goes wrong, the queer mixture of use and sleek conventional lies that make the people and the paper. Kelly cries to me all the time, when talking of the London edition, "Nothing startling; the world doesn't want to be startled." Quite so. Did you ever see a donkey that had an instantaneous affection for a motor?

Yes, it's all very well to pander to a mule public if you are paid ten thousand dollars a year for the cultivation of thistles; but for twenty-five dollars a week to correct proofs on the subject of the "Loves of Great Men," written in the Felicia Hemans style, is galling to anyone who judges by practical experience, with present-day genius, how those Great Men probably did in reality conduct their affairs of sentiment.

I have come to the limit of my strength. I could not endure very much longer the immense dusty rooms, the click of the typewriters, the herding together for hours with people, breathing, nerve-sucking human beings who talk mental choctaw; then the brief glimpses of the water, the liquid vitality that foams around the ferry and bursts against it in white broken stars on the two daily trips, the one thing

that helps to keep me alive, that and a huge flower-weighted, perfume-drenched mass of white honeysuckle that is the first thing I see in the evening when I leave the train at Woodlawn.

I could not endure any longer those abominable luncheons in the crowded restaurant, the watching the clock, the electric fans, the smell of cooking food, the walk back under the iron sun to the building through the straw-covered, packing-case-piled street.

But it is over: I sail next Saturday. They have given me my one hundred-dollar steamer ticket; and I, even I, shall descend on the people I know, and, what is more important, the people who know me. I shall descend on them as an editor. I who had visions of renting a house on Hill Street, of appearing in a mist of green spangles and opals.

I shall live up to the part, however, and

wear Liberty serges and long chains of uncut stones. The one trail of the serpent, though, will be my feet. Sensible or unsensible, good or bad form, I can't renounce my stockings with the fronts of real lace, or the suede slippers with wicked heels. You can always judge a woman's morals by her feet, and I cannot induce myself to hide my polyandrous tendencies by assuming broader soles to my shoes.

LONDON

"The Woman's Salon," November.—A blind street, lined with tenements, begins opposite my window. Underneath, in this street, huge drays and carts crunch along all day. A saloon is on the corner of the blind street. Next door is a leather warehouse, where rolls of rank smelling skins are being hauled in and out from morning till night.

My office is whitewashed, powdered to grey with dust. The whole front is taken up by the immense window with a glassy crumpled yellow blind. There is a large roll-top desk for me and green shaded electric bulbs. I should say the desk was man's size; certainly the whole place was not built for a woman.

The stairs are long, wooden, dusty, uneven; it is almost impossible to get a cab here when you stumble your way out at five o'clock in the evening. From ten in the morning till five in the evening, two sulphur yellow dips into the clamour of the underground railway, two disgusted dirty walks down warehoused, barricaded streets, trams, trucks, drays, an ooze of work-girls and labourers, solemn ragged children, and a green, slime-covered, stone-slabbed church-yard.

I get my lips between my teeth, and face it each morning. I am white with dismay at it when I reach my desk and find a pile of proofs waiting for me, a bundle of copy from the advertising manager to be given with directions to the head compositor.

The compositor comes down in answer to my telephone—an abhorrent creature,

so weirdly marked with small-pox that you wonder why he wants to obtrude that painfully mutilated body on the world. He stands at my chair while I give my directions. He feels my shrinking, and takes a diabolical pleasure in coming as often to the office as he can. Then I dictate some letters to my stenographer—a typical lower middle-class English girl, with a thick coil of hair dressed low, and a string of tiny false pearls around the neck of her collarless blouse. Then I leave the room, ostensibly to wash my hands, in reality to crouch down in the grinding horror of the toilet-room in front of the cracked looking-glass and broken cup on the shelf, and ask myself how long I can stand this, and why, in the name of common sense, I am standing it at all.

There is a ceaseless oozing of horror from the tenements of the opposite street. Men staggering up it, constantly yelling

things; women, overflowing their clothes, with bloated faces, and striking at any children that belong to them. Suddenly there will be a rush of voices, a trampling of feet, and a man, with a blood-stained bandage around his head, will be half carried up the street, held on either side by a policeman and a woman. I opened my eyes too soon one day—the man had fallen on the steps. I had never seen a human being fall before. It clutched your heart with mysterious terror. Policemen, whose existence in the world had been before to me vaguely a matter of crowded street crossings, suddenly enlarged into a haven for my eyes when I walked through the streets. The stiff helmets, the blue uniform, the broad shoulders, represented actual personal safety to my scorched knowledge of life in other streets.

The very sound of the factory girls singing and laughing as they poured out

of the buildings at the noon hour froze me with fear. They would walk four abreast, their arms linked, the limp feathers in their hats nodding over their broad, strong faces. I met them once suddenly face to face when by chance I was on the street and turned a corner. I shrank to one side. I seemed suddenly a thing they could break between their fingers. I was afraid of the heavy red hands that waved negligently as they walked in unison to their hoarse singing. My very clothes seemed grotesque. I felt myself a poster of some far-away play hung in a low street, and in a place to be spattered by the slimy mud of the traffic. These women, these people, were like spirits of a political revolution swarming out of their burrows, wallowing in their blood and dirt, and feasting on their yells and drunkenness. I seemed to hear the far-away drums of the women who marched to Versailles.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Park was empty when I came to it to-day, the wide fields were veiled in the ambiguous early twilight of the wet air. The trees were subdued, overweighted, the flowers pressed down into the water-soaked mould; but through it all, over it all, like the magnetism of life, drenched the penetrating sweetness of the earth smell, the London haze that clung to everything as the skies and the world met in the upright, fairy stream.

This was not the Park I had known; this was only a Park with memories, or a present of exquisite closed secrets.

Yet it was elemental; I recognised that; as elemental, as necessary, as the incident of birth, the ignorance of childhood: the rain could make me shudder even though I loved it. It paled my face when I realised that I could no longer return to childish things.

I thought I might catch a half-hour at the pictures on this ghost-like afternoon, and was driven through the silent open mud, under the overhanging arches of St. James's Park—the Park of the magical waterways, of the silver swans, all drowning in saffron wet mist, past the Carlton, where I saw for a moment the fog curve to the form of purple orchids, to the stone lions of Trafalgar Square. I shut my eyes. I was near by, a little too brutally close, to something I did not want to see. I hurried up the steps of the National Gallery, but I was ashamed of my fear and turned to face it. Down over Whitehall to Parliament Square: the towers of St. Stephen's fluted through the mist. Again it was a picture—an engraving made on metal by fire, only the luminous softness of tempered light, nothing more. I thought it beautiful, as I would think any other pillared tower beautiful that was

clasped and wreathed by the changing foam of the hazy waves of rain. We looked at each other, and the quiet of the stones was not quieter than my heart.

The staircase opened out its curve before me; it implied a shelter as I went slowly up and caught the changing flames of the ether of new worlds in the planes of rose and purple and green. But they retreated, closed, dimmed, as we lose the reflection of the sky in still water, if we bend over to see more closely; and I panted to them hungrily, more hungrily for what I wanted to desire, than for what I really missed.

I reached the rooms of the Pre-Raphaelites. I had not before cared for them very much, but to-day the even rows of angels in the pallid air, the blond skies and pale earth, the unfaded ashen roses, the aureoles of gold made of the texture

of extinct dreams, gathered me to their ethereal peace.

I had forgotten; but, even so, there had been nothing to remember. Yet one small black fact crept venomously to me out of the sequestered silence of that year. I must meet him again. No matter what he might ever say or do throughout my life, I must revenge that year, or forgive that year; and I do not come of a race that forgives, and I am not afraid of the bitter ecstasy of revenge. The mere fact of seeing unbars the door to that inner monster that claws at my will and demands to be satisfied with cruelty.

For everything I have done, all the pain endured, all the danger, was made possible by him. It was well enough for him to guard me; but did he think, if once started, how I would guard myself? He knew I was a woman who would make reality into some barbarous excess. No

one else had the power to take me out of my dream world. He was the only human being to whom I would confess humanity. He is responsible for it all—everything, and everything I ever do.

I remember once—in the illness, when they touched me—I screamed with the pain. If I could see him bound, and hear him scream once—just once—I would be satisfied; just to see him look up as hurt people do, asking all that is pitiless for help, and to hear him scream once with the pain.

But I am not ready for moods like that. I have my life to make. I have the joy and the beauty of the world to fathom. I have no time—no time yet for those retrogressive satisfactions. I would rather gratify the desires of the woman of the twentieth century than pander to the passion of the creature of the stone age.

I am in London. I hear always the

tempered sound, like the distant sound of a sea; but I might just as well be in the midst of a prairie for all the life of London, the real life, I can make mine—the real life, marble and orchids and men whose names are the sign-posts of history —the crossroads where nations pause uncertainly.

I must write to him soon, of course. It is August now; I can't put it off very much longer. He is in town only for five days more. It was in the *Morning Post* that he leaves for Homburg on the 5th.

Mysteriously, the hatefulness and strange horror of this life, the very obscure horror of the tenements, has become a black place where I have found I can hide myself. Once I let him know I am here, this must end. Then the old nerve-racking tug-of-war as to will and supremacy will begin. I know his influence over

me. He would pour my life into a cup and drink it up.

I let him come here, to this sordid bleak place with the wooden staircase, the filthy tenements opposite, the muddy streets. It was after five; I sent the stenographer away early. I wanted to have time to carefully clamp my mind with being alone, first. The huge blind on the window was up, showing the moist grey air, and the occasional yellow, trembling street lights. I wanted nothing that suggested our being alone. The electric lamps in the office were spurting under their green shades, my roll-top desk was open and seethed with papers. Occasionally, when I could hear the rumble of something that was not the wheels of a truck, my blood would weigh in my eyelids till they fell over my eyes.

And then the wheels came that stopped.

BUCKINGHAM GATE

October.—He commenced the usual scene this afternoon.

"If I could only believe, when I come into the room, that it is love you are thinking of. But you never give yourself up, you are always self-conscious. You never lose sight of yourself for a moment."

The expression on his face was familiar.

"No, not when there are two such lovely Venetian mirrors in the room," I answered mildly. "I couldn't resist letting you take the flat when I saw them. Venetian glass is my passion, you know—it simply compels me, draws me almost like a spell." I pulled myself away and wandered over to the mantel, where I could

move the tips of my fingers up and down on the bowls and flagons.

"So that was it, was it? You were not thinking of me, you were not thinking of being able to be with me here, of the pleasure of seeing me here—you were thinking only of the Venetian glass." He expanded with rage.

"Not only of the glass, Oscar," I corrected gently; "the curtains are very beautiful." I was just going on in a most interesting way to enlarge on the beautiful colour of the curtains when he became angry and left, and so I was able after all to get to the Zarathustra at Queen's Hall. I was so afraid I would be late for it.

My mind and I are just sitting tentatively on these green chairs for a few weeks so that we can decide what we really want to do.

At least I have time now for the con-

certs, the picture galleries, am able to read again.

The incident of being an editor almost eclipsed the fact of my being a woman. We are not built to go out in all weathers and sit in a stiff chair from ten to five.

As a matter of fact, the House—if it hadn't been for the careless weakness of a corrosive drug—did me far less harm physically than conducting the literary policy of a magazine; than those iron-bound months of getting money by my brains.

I look at it quite impartially, because, strictly speaking, I am really an extremely well-educated woman and quite clever—quite above the average woman in intelligence.

And how very much more interesting it was! how many more interesting people I met! Fast women are necessarily only with rich men, and very often with the

cleverest men the world has: a man under those circumstances gives the very best of his mind—for he would loathe to be refused—and with me they knew what was the price. The nights when we have talked the dawn in and it has found the man still huddled, wan, and stripping his soul. I can get again the faint dead smell of the flowers drooping in the ashy smoke and the clink of new life as the bowls of ice came in and the hiss of the wine bubbled up again in the glass. And then we would close out the day, the grey ghost trees, the keen smell of the reddening sky.

Tuesday.—I sometimes wonder as I look at it all if there is anything in it for me. I don't want to be welded into anybody's life like an expensive painting. I don't want to add to the decoration of other people's days. My life is for myself.

Every minute I live wants to be for some tangible benefit to myself.

And Oscar torments me so by his absurd assumption of outworn ideas, that one-third of my time is spent in yielding to him, and two-thirds in furious mental protests against the false situation. If he would only recognise that he is merely useful, that he is an experience, that I've got to have some money from somewhere, now that I have left that devastating *Salon.* But he assumes that I am dedicating my life to him and that my fount of life is my bank account. So it is, but not exactly in the way he means.

Oh, for money of my own!

What a happy woman Cleopatra was! A few gorgeously built male slaves, and then kill them off in the morning. *Off with his head!* O du lieber Himmel! it's all very well to laugh, but men are such horrors if you are dependent on them.

Saturday.—I am corroded by his mood. I am, after all, human—based on the beast, and he appeals to me in the fiercest strength of life. He owns me, and exults in all that our humanity makes possible.

Not that I care, that I think there is anything better; but I want the other too, and he is blinding me to music, he comes between me and the pleasure of colour, he makes himself the sum of life to me, he makes me as mad as himself.

But I know myself. If I am drowned in it, he must be drowned in it too—and I loathe being serious.

How tired I am of all this plunging up and down in the scale of things! With other men I am looking on, they never seemed to get into the world where I live, they were only the varnish on the idea of Italy, the frame of Stockholm, a nail on which to hang the music of Berlin.

Tools, stepping-stones, the opportunity to escape, escape from the clamp of circumstance that rusts into your body if it is not broken by emotion.

Ah, if I could only lie back and take life with open arms!

December.—I sit and look at the Venetian mirrors, the Venetian sconces, the Venetian vases: they are tranquil, cold, lovely.

I have only mignonette in them and white narcissus. Colour is getting now to weigh on my nerves like a blow.

His face was distorted when he pressed me down on the floor between his knees. "Say you will be faithful to me, promise you will be faithful to me." Faithful to him—and he has his wife!

Oh, but he dismembers each day when he comes, each minute, each week, with his violence! He rips my mind in pieces,

he hurts my flesh. I wait quivering in the midst of it all for the storm of kisses that beat me down into silence, that conquer me like blows, that make me a whipped slave to do what he likes with.

Yet he is the only man who can kiss me into that strange unconsciousness, that death of will that makes you a thing merely of flesh. I read once of how boa-constrictors get their food ready to eat.

I shudder when he drags me to him, when he pushes my throat back, yet I wait for that sudden oblivion that will leave me helpless.

He is vampiring my senses, he is dragging me nearer and nearer each time to some flood that will smother us both. Oscar, let me go!

MONTE CARLO

I

January.—It knew I would come back, my exquisite, make-believe world, the place of unreality and nerves, the sun, and of the altar of Chance.

I am quite care-free; no one expects me to be anything but myself. I stand aside, I watch life, I am deliciously alone. I can hardly repress myself from spreading out my hands in visible ecstasy when I first go out in the extreme morning air and meet the golden waves of the sun, the spring coolness of the earth's smell, the pressure of the flowers' perfume, the dazzling horizon of the diamond-faceted sea. At night when I leave the Casino the convex sky, hung in constellations of jewels,

dips through the lines of the palm fronds, and the darkness is Nature living, sheltered in the shadowed petals of unseen roses.

Everything is shut away by the click of the little sibilant balls as they whirl to the touch of Fate, and life rises and falls to the drip of the cards as they fall endlessly, making the scale of Fate sway up and down.

The Riviera Palace Hotel.—This seemed still further away, still more removed. I have a terror of masses of people, of being near my kind. This mountain ledge paved with flowers, where I step from my white bedroom to the Terrace set austerely with its hyacinths and cactus, is held far above the burning blue of the sea, the little gilt-crowned world that lies on the shore.

As I take tea in the corridor in the late

afternoon the huge windows become transmuted mirrors and shadow the marble columns till they stretch out on the sunset-flushed sea and sky in endless colonnades of mystic castles.

I am so glad to be alone. I stretch out my arms to myself and gather back all the wounded, distracted selves that have borne the past two years.

I have been tormented by the sudden wish to gamble again. I look at the wish with a sort of sullen surprise. I have no intention of risking the money I have; it was earned too brutally to let me be willing to risk having to earn any more that way.

Out of the world up here, surrounded and calmed by the quiet garden walks of transplanted flowers, I have no need to go down into the spiked sensations that come with the oscillation of Fate. I like to see

my Fate still, undisturbed, for a while, like the curved petals of the lilies that lie sheltered in the artificial pools.

When I went into the Rooms to-night I came face to face with my lover of Little Hungary.

The world rocked, and the blinding well of electricity was whirled up at my feet. I caught my senses in my hand to steady them. I was drowning in the same torrent of stars and fire and intoxication. He was there, I would see him again, he was in the world, it had not been a dream. He was real, not the half vision of a stray god that I changed the memory to; the blood hummed in my ears. You cannot seem dazed in the gambling rooms; ecstasy seems there to mean a practical madness. I turned to a near-by table and put down some napoleons, anywhere, anything, so

that I could have an excuse for my changed, heart-swept face.

And then, when I raised my eyes, he was before me. I met his eyes—he and I—with consciousness face to face. And then, the invisible flood roaring to my lips, I fled from the Rooms. I would have fainted if I had stayed. But he is here, I shall see him again; but I must wait, wait, I am not able yet, I am blinded yet.

I feel as though I had been drinking electric light; all my life between to-night and Little Hungary has shrivelled like paper in fire. He is here—the pulse of the world to me, the man who made life life to me. I am staggering as though I had been caught, and flung into a sea of fire, that had turned me into itself, and made me leap with its flames. The thought that he is here is enough, it is drowning me in delight.

Sunday Afternoon.—There is a corner of the grounds where the cliff juts out like a wall and makes on the other side a mountain grotto. They have trained heliotrope over it, and the top of the wall is planted with pink geraniums. I took my book to the chair there this afternoon. Pater, the most artificial and exquisite thing I know, Greek statuary in prose. But I could see the sea, tremulous against the horizon, and I rested idle without reading, my whole body and senses bathed in the ineffable wholeness of life, my being alive, and in the sight of his eyes.

A whole day of uncounted rapture, the mere fact of existence is enough; his life near seems to consume mine and radiate like the flame of a dominating planet.

Monday Morning.—The maid brought my coffee as usual this morning, and drew the cord that kept the blue silk curtains

together. The sun rushed in and sparkled on the silver and the pink paper of the *Morning Telegram.* I opened it with the feeling that it might have some mention of his name.

And then a paragraph blistered before my eyes: "W. V. Kemp leaves for Paris to-day after a short stay at the Hôtel de Paris." I crowded down in the bed, my eyes blind.

I am so tired of life—the eternal struggle, the never-reached peace. Yet the peace was there. I knew the world held for me utter, complete satisfaction—his abominable money, his miserable wealth. If he were only poor—I could speak, write, go—what do I care for his money? All it does is to close him in by a wall and shut him from me.

But his beggarly wealth at least keeps him in the papers, will always let me know where he is; and when I can pay the price,

when once I have the money that will let me go with the people I know, I can meet him. Birth, brains, youth—all I want is the money, the miserable, miserable money —and I am so tired, so tired! I had struggled so, and now the old struggle must commence all over again. Stone walls, palls of fire, upright swords.

I have been struck too hard by life. I drag my brokenness away like a wounded dog to get knit again and ready to fight. Life lies at the edge of things ready to tear me with its claws. But for a little while I am going to rest, to set myself, like a watch, and see if my nerves and body are under control. I've got to use them again, I must do something; but now I have crept out of life just to warm myself, to fill myself with the wine and glamour of the sun—to draw it into my veins and heart, the blood of the world. I have been sapped dry of vitality.

MONTE CARLO

II

March.—The Englishman has followed me very persistently and I have hardly noticed. I have always dimly surmised that he was there, and taken it for granted that it would be he who would see that the servants came out quickly if I wanted my chair moved or tea brought. He would divine, it seemed, what I wanted, and that I also wanted to be let alone and not to talk, not to meet anyone.

He is more or less an invalid, I imagine; he never goes to the Rooms, but stays up here all day lying in the sun.

It is the Berlioz celebration, and I never conceived or imagined or dreamed that mere lights on a white chateau, in the

tropical trees, on the curved Terrace, and a hilly street leading sideways down to the amethyst sea, could be so celestially lovely. Monte Carlo was covered by a network of descended stars. I almost laughed at the marvel of it, at the delight of the transcendent myriad lights that had fastened themselves to everything like a cloud of stellar parasites devouring the marble and palms.

I went down to the Casino Terrace to see it all, and walked up and down ecstatically, contentedly, alone. But always I was conscious of the tall figure in the long ulster, keeping carefully in the background, but so obviously fearful of the consequences of a woman walking alone at night on the Terrace at Monte Carlo. How foolish! This is the capital of madness, of dreams, of the inversion of the usual practicality. He would expect

babes to buckle on swords, and cats to turn from saucers of cream.

It amused me, but made me a little impatient. I have so long been face to face with deeper dangers, that a snatch at my purse is not very much dreaded; and I am so palpably a woman accustomed to being taken care of, that no one would dream that a husband or a brother was not only by chance away.

I couldn't make up my mind to go to bed last night, and so, a little after eleven, I unlatched my door window again, and went out on the Terrace. Why can't people stay up all night and sleep all the garish morning? It was a disclosed rapture of ethereal perfume and translucent greenness and glittering dew-wet flowers. I went over to the balustrade, cloakless, without even a scarf, and opened my hands out on the cool stone ledge. I heard

then the impatient opening of another of the doors and a man's hasty walk behind me. The Englishman strode up to me, his ulster half dragged on over his evening dress.

"Aren't you afraid of taking cold?" he asked rather harshly. "Please put this on." "This" was a driving coat, and he seemed perfectly unsurprised, and so was I, when I meekly turned and let him help me on with it.

Friday.—I am not in the least a passionate woman, hardly even sensual—merely inordinately curious, colossally ambitious, and supremely emancipated from the accustomed prejudices concerning the vital actions of life. But there is no doubt about it, I must face it, that I enjoy the Englishman's being with me; the rest of his looking after me, ordering the coachman, the servants, pouring my tea, carry-

ing my furs, lighting my cigarettes. He has a lascivious little trick of doing this, transferring it from his lips to mine; it is like the lustfulness of a Puck or adolescent faun. You can almost see the twinkle of the pointed furry ears in the action. And I yield, I even smoke the cigarettes. Tom is deliciously attractive to me in the way a young unspoiled satyr would be if it should spring living out of the marble in the moss and fountains of the Borghese Gardens.

That kiss has never been repeated; he understands it would be useless to ask, and there is far more amusement in the denial than there would be in the climax. Climax or denial, I am always indifferent which, but one must be amused. He is essentially unspoiled; you can think of him as being frigidly, unconsciously, inherently the essence of honour, honour that has never felt the sooty fingers of a

woman's inquisitive hand to test its texture.

He has all the suggestion of domineering pride that men of the conquering white nation get in India. India gives a peculiar hardening of the mouth to Englishmen; and Tom is so young—about thirty perhaps—so nervous, instinctive, supple to feeling, that the race pride sits on him as quaintly as the little laughing furry ears of crass instinct that curve up now and then.

We are always together; we drive, tea, breakfast, and have walks, with a carriage following to take us up when he grows tired; then I take supper with him sometimes at Ciro's or dine at the Hôtel de Paris.

But the favourite thing of all we do is to go to a fairy place we have found in the ramparts of Monaco. A nook away down the cliff set in the stone wall, a deep

embrasure with an arched opening looking out on the harbour and the half-hoop of the Casino Terrace. The ledge is wide—wide enough to sit on without growing dizzy by looking at the depths below; and here we bring rugs and cushions and candied fruits for me, and cigarettes and books, and lounge and read and talk.

MONTE CARLO

III

April.—He wants me so much to marry him. I like him so much, the sudden rest from all struggle would be so great, that I am almost tempted to do it. It is always so easy to do the proper thing. It takes such tremendous moral courage to do what is called wrong.

He is impatient, eager, almost querulous, like all invalids; and the strain of being denied what really there is no reason I should not consent to, were it not for an unplanned, obscure goal in my own mind, is keeping him in an unnatural fever.

As he pleads, there is no reason why we should not be married at once. I have no

one to ask, he would blot out the rest of the world as far as he is concerned, so long as he could take that villa on the way to Cap d'Œil and be married to me by the English clergyman in Nice. At once, at once—there is no reason to wait. With his love for me there may be the wish of the sick man to be free from worry, and to be quiet and petted and have the ownership of what he wants.

But surely I have earned the peace of a few weeks, the pleasure of taking up look by look the love that spreads at my feet.

I enjoy having him near me; he seems to spend his whole being in the warmth of the thing that burns him: he is clutched by it, held by it, and all the energy of his vitality is poured into a grail of passion.

People are just so much vitality, electricity, to each other. We consume or

are consumed. Oscar drains my very veins of their blood. I am wan and attenuated after being with him. His kiss eats down in the fibre of my heart and robs a pulse from every minute.

The other to me—that staggers thought. But this thing I drink like the cup of the world's life.

Thursday.—We drove to the Eden Hotel for tea this afternoon; we got back for a couple of hours to the Garden of Eden. We passed the villa on the way with its closed windows and wallflower blossom enclosure, and the shimmer of the blue enamel of the Mediterranean through the rows of cypress trees at the foot of the garden on the edge of the cliff. It would be peace well enough; his hand groped for mine and I let him find it. Perfume and the sun always subdue me like the beat of music. How the policy

of nations would be inverted if symphonies were played during Cabinet meetings! Even to men who were unconscious of the beauty, who only heard it like the rattle of the streets, calculated rhythm and intervals would unconsciously control their blood. Sound is physical, the sun and perfume and silence of gardens are physical, and bind us like bands and lead us like the promise of passionate eyes.

When we came, though, to a curve in the road, our carriage stopped and the coachman raised his hat. A funeral—the coffin carried on an open bier—was swaying slowly through the gate of a hidden cemetery. I drew my hand away, and the bitter chill that any recognition of the facts of humanity always brings to me settled over the sun and filled the air with the odour of dead things and the cry of universal pain. The pain-linked world, it poisoned the clinging of his fingers; to

other women that meant marriage, children, more pain, more lives to agonise. It was a trick, this love—a blind, a baited hook, the glare of plumage on birds, the mane of beasts, the veil of lies on humanity.

I did not want to go inside when we came to the hotel. I wanted the illusion of the air yet, the vision moments of the flower-separated sky and sea. We went silently down a row of broad steps bordered by a low wall covered with flame-coloured nasturtiums. At the foot was a ruined Grecian temple where the nasturtiums dripped their vermilion glory from the shattered plinth to the pedestal; the blood of many sacrifices to distant gods flowered in perpetual oblation. Behind a clump of olive trees and cactus there was a round corner jutting out to the sea and overgrown with white hawthorn and heliotrope. We drew our chairs

there, the deep lounging wicker chairs that yield and yet let the air touch you, and I leaned back, my hat off, and Tom lighted my cigarettes for me. We did not talk very much or break the transfigured afternoon; we let the gods lend us a glimpse of Eden.

I was happy, utterly happy for the moment. I am very fond of Tom, and Nature makes her illusions beautifully. There is no doubt about it, while they last they are Paradise regained.

The moments went by like the spray of fountains that have been set to play in the sun; and even when we rose to go Tom touched my arm and pointed to the tiny jewelled bay scintillating with reflected suns, to the white pillars of a temple half hidden in a grove on the further shore, and told me some story of a man cast on an Italian island, who loved some girl there and rowed out on the bay in

the glittering nights with her, with the "desire of his heart." With the desire of his heart! The nasturtiums waved their flame to our feet as we passed up the steps reluctantly, slowly, or pausing now and then to look back, or now to draw closer together when the spray of other flowers would sway over the balustrade and tempt us to lean to their fragrance.

And that night I told him I could never marry him. After the long, silent drive back I asked to be alone for a while, and then on the Terrace, when the place was all silent and closed, I came out as I had done the first time, and I asked him to go away, to leave me—that I wanted my life to myself.

Friday.—He left this morning. A note was brought to me to say he had gone to Arcachon, that he would come back whenever I wanted him.

The South seemed rather empty to me this morning; and strangely, for the first time in weeks the sky is grey, the water like heaving lead, and a cold, ugly rain comes down now and then. I have had a fire built in my room; it warms my heart; it is one of the elements anyway, and I must get back to living with the elements, not to these grasping, disturbing human ties.

It is blanker than I thought, and I am glad to be alone. But suddenly life has come to a standstill. Even when the sun shines it presses on my eyes and pains them. There is an oppression over everything, and the blood of the Southern spring seems thick.

CAIRO

Shepheard's Hotel, May.—I wanted to be so dominated by the sun that there would be no flame in me that it would not consume, and Egypt had meant to me the very centre of the South.

There is no reality of glamour in the world; we must give from ourselves all the glamour existence possesses.

From underneath my window comes the penetrating scream of the pelican, the fountains are standing half waterless in the blazing pallid garden, the air is imprisoned in light, a desert made transparent, and enclosing the world in dry, sun glare. The moisture of life is out of realisation.

The darkened room is wired in by heat;

the monkey chained to the balcony underneath is sliming its hands in a half-decayed banana, and answers the scream of the pelican now and then with a revolting chuckling cry; a half-naked Arab girl is hanging out red and blue shirts on a roof beside the garden. And this is Egypt!

The sun-gilted, lotus-scented Egypt of dreams, the Egypt of gold barges moving through rivers of iris. Where flamingoes screamed at the sun from banks of osier, where slaves moved weighted by silver anklets and chains of agate and chrysoprase.

A fat Arab is trailing a coil of hose past the brittle flowers with the two stumpy dachshunds snapping at his wet blue smock. His ugly bare feet and scored ankles insult even the dusty grass, the spurt of water frightens the crows from the trees, and they flap their wide wings

squawking to the roof of the turtle house. And they are not even vultures.

Perhaps up the Nile—with the great temples, the immortal silence—but it would be too hot and it would cost a hundred pounds, and I haven't a hundred pounds.

It is merely ordinary bathos. Two hot tired tears ooze out of my eyes, and I catch them on the tips of my fingers and look at them.

It is the noise I cannot endure, the unending, meaningless, insane noise. When the Arab boys begin that monotonous staccato clang of talk I wait breathless for the gods to strike them dead, and then always at three, in the very heart of the heat, an Arab wedding or funeral passes the hotel. I am stretched out on the huge bed panting as the heat empties the consciousness out of my veins, when the low boom of the sound begins in the

distance and slowly, infinitely, comes nearer and nearer. It takes so long, it swells from a thing I understand to mad hordes coming to massacre and torture, to search the place. No matter where I might hide I would be found—and I am undressed—I haven't even time to put on clothes. I cower in the pillows with the veins in my forehead binding my head by steel.

Sound—Music, did I leave you? You are having your revenge.

For the first few wonder-struck moments it gave pleasure, the first journey on the desert, the sleek yellow earth beast warming its flanks under unceasing suns, parasited by the reptile-headed camels, stirring only to the blankness of the native voices; but giving the mockery of beauty to the creatures it possesses, the monsters that move near in their human mask.

Veiled women pattering on donkeys from an empty distance to the empty horizon, the big-muscled men in loose robes.

I saw the first one of these blue-smocked brown things standing rigid on the brow of a sphinx of sand. It was a phrase. A brown organ point of the 'cellos with the shrill piping of the glare of the piccolos.

But the sense of these brown things, these caricatures of humanity, these husks of ourselves, left as life moved to the North, nauseate me like open graves in a deserted cemetery. When I watch them for a while from the Terrace, or after I have forced myself to drive through the bazaars, I come away with the black lines under my eyes half-way down my cheeks, with every nerve in my body trembling with disgust.

The sound and the mutilations and their vile smile, the slime of the native

streets, the hideous cries, the vagrant eyes, the scored cheeks, the flies matted on the children's faces, the unfathomable beastliness of the smell of alien bodies, the rinds of melon lying in the streets, the wanton bray of the donkeys, the open shirts of the men showing their black glistening chests, the money clinking in cups, the mutilated nostrils and eyes, the dust that penetrates and clings and enfolds with impalpable horror. It is nameless hell—a hell not for any crime or cruelty, but just a hell because existence has set them in one space and let them rot to death; they are caught in a coil of creation from which there is no escape. They seem held in a trap of the sun.

June 1st.—The hard greyness of some future veil seems to settle down on me with the sun in these heat-broken days. The sky slowly closes in on you in an arc of

burning metal, and tissue by tissue, vein by vein, draws out your senses. In the dust world of sun-pricks there is no feeling left.

My nerve seems to be slipping away from me, as though it were another person, leaving me helpless in front of this heat and clamour. When I close my eyes I only see the flame of the red fez: it spreads over Cairo like masses of putrescent poppies springing from a world of slime.

And even in my room where it is just myself, where just my own mood can dominate, the smell from the orange blossoms and the pink roses the Turk sends me, sicken my blood. Just myself, and these are the things I bring myself. The mood of Egypt that I was curious of, the Orient of the Mind.

1.30 A. M.—I turned on each globe of

the electric light and studied myself in the glass when I came in. I wanted to be quite sure it was myself. I wanted to see the myself, to be with her, to be sure of her. No, she wasn't changed. I was white; even my lips looked tight and grey, but there was no change in my eyes. I looked for that. Myself, I don't want your eyes to change. I shall take care of you—I shall keep you from the harm touching you.

I thought I had seen the depths, but this was beyond words abomination.

The reek of the incense, the naked contorted women. And Life makes lust this. This is the dance they all so want to see; these things—women like that—what it all in the end means.

Have I been blind, taking rouge when I thought it was fire? Is this then the kind of thing men think passion, sensuality, suggestiveness, women . . .

I do not even dare to throw that creature's flowers from the window. I mustn't let myself go, I mustn't let myself go.

And I have been so curious, and I thought myself so brave. I thought it was human too, and I would know my humanity. I don't want to be human any more. I am tired, so tired.

The way for the money is beyond my strength.

SCHEVENINGEN

July.—The smooth yellow sands, the smooth sun-dyed sea, the curving waves shelled with white foam, the iced air, the continuous, smooth, tenuous murmur of the sea, the sea I love, that soothes me, like a hand on my forehead smoothing down the swollen veins. I lean back in the hooded chairs, and let my soul slip out of me out to the meshed light, where the sea merges into the horizon, that melts over the vast cool depths; the scented silence after the rasp of life, the immensity after the cramping pettiness of pain.

I came back to the music, but the Kursaal is bare, gaunt, and I am weak for the luxury that rests the eyes, if I listen to the

cry that tears the soul. Music needs fountains, palms, down to rest on; to put yourself on an empyrean cloud and yearn to the passion of the gods while your spine is being rasped by a wooden chair and your temper deranged by a person near you gulping beer, is too antithetical to be nice. I am past going ostrich-like to Art and swallowing all sorts of visual scrap-iron for the sake of a grain of sound.

I detest hard seats, I loathe people who drink beer, I almost cry with the inability to get the rest I want with the death-song of the Brahms symphony booming in my ears; and so I go out on the windy Terrace, where an untidy, grease-marked attendant brings me iced coffee in a thick ugly glass.

It is absurd; there is no use living unless you can barricade yourself with every conceivable beauty. Life itself trembles on the precipice of physical pain, human-

ity undisguised is disgusting, and the facts of existence undraped by wealth are intolerable beastliness.

Greasy attendants, thick dishes, incompetent housemaids, a zinc bath-tub; why in the name of immortal heaven should one endure these things? And Art only maddens you by the hints of an ecstasy that needs all the velvet and orchids and jewels of riches to frame. Could you imagine Tristan and Isolde singing the love duet on a horsehair sofa? Tristan and Isolde got more sheer pleasure out of dying for love than all the indigent husbands and wives of the world ever achieved out of living to have children. Oh, I grant they may love, or think what they call love, have their share in the flashes of illusion; but as illusion is the only thing worth while in life, the only life liveable is the one that makes it possible to be always illusioned.

Monday.—Those weeks in Cairo proved that however much we may want a thing, however we may protest that we are willing to pay the price, something in us, not of ourselves, controls us otherwise. I held the price for it all in my hand, and let it drift through my fingers. I had no power to make myself yield.

And I can't, I won't, let Oscar think he can control my life, come when he wishes, be everything to me. I can't go back to him. Must it always be coming away? Am I to have no peace, no rest, no content? But to be willing to give myself, I must be free to give or refuse. Oh, if I could only rob a bank with the blissful certainty that I would not be found out! It takes training and nerve and brain even to be a criminal, and I haven't the training for anything. I am only so much flesh and blood that inexorably in a few years

will be so much carrion as far as the use of it, the beauty of it, is concerned.

Carrion—and then—oh, yes, I shall die before then; I have no intention of being kicked out of living before I kick away life. Life! I wonder how many people would give millions if they could buy the youth, the life, the years, I have naturally before me, that I am so tired of. I loathe life, and they want it.

August.—I have done with life; it is around my throat and choking me, it is too heavy to carry, I have lost the rebound. It was myself against the world, and what had I to fight with to get the things I wanted, and all the time clogged by the hideous handicap of restraining inherited tendencies? Even now I am ruining my life by some obscure pride that will not let me yield to Oscar, wheedle him, cajole him into letting me have what I want and

freedom too. A cleverer woman than I could do it, but I can't; it would not be the myself who had done the other things I have done if I could. We are the slaves of the past generations that made us, and our actions are as circumscribed as though bounded by an iron wall. We are as unable to do some things as to live under water or to fly. It is all the inexorable sum total which, from the addition of each circumstance, brings the inevitable result. Some half-forgotten words mark it—a "stiff-necked generation." That is it: that describes me.

And yet the sum total I hate so much, that is choking me now, has brought me some gorgeous hours and great love. But I was unmoved; for me, they did not exist as men, they did not make me feel real. But what is it that makes people real to each other, that lifts them from seeming automata of flesh and blood to a vi-

tality that makes the very air you breathe their essence; and, if you can't be with them, that makes it seem as if the very oxygen had been shut out of the universe?

September.—I am still young and to be deceived. I shall shut life out while it still offers things to me and take a gift to Death of myself. That foolish Elaine and her barge and the voyage to Camelot! My lovers are not dead, but it is yet to death alone that I want to voyage.

It draws me, makes me yearn for it more than anything in life ever did.

I am curious, too, to know the secret of death. Any idea that humanity has of a future life is merely ridiculous, and extinction is so appalling! As for that, no possible explanation of the making of the world gives an adequate reason for the unthinkable millions of years of suffering. Surely extinction, non-creation,

would have been better than that. No compensation seems possible for all this useless pain, from the very horses shivering in the snow in a winter street, the birds snared by a snake, a child suffocating and dying in agonies—what limitless repetitions of agony! How much better if empty space, which we cannot conceive, had been left! Empty space, uncreated space. What first dust of nebulæ drifted together to form all this? What wretched minds we have when we cannot think away matter or mind and imagine a state of uncreation—nothing—when there never was anything—not even a void!

But if this is creation, if what we know and see is the culmination of unutterable power, it is immeasurably inadequate. When there was the power to form worlds, they, after all, were very poor ones. It seems such a colossal possibility with such mean results.

Even gravitation and the swing of the stars, and the fire of unnumbered suns, is really very trifling when we consider that that is all: a few incandescent balls hung up in unmeasured space. Why clutter up the space at all? There is nothing gained.

If one could only find some way of exploding the world, of so deranging every magnetic influence of our solar system that the fragments would hurtle through space, chasing system after system into a series of celestial explosions, till entire creation should bang off like a line of fireworks and the whole box of tricks be destroyed!

LONDON

October.—It is an unwise thing to wait for Fate. It is a reckless thing to stake life against the opening of the heavens and the interposition of chance.

Why I came back to London I do not know. Why I drifted through those months in Holland, there in the straightness of its canals, weary of the little red houses, buffeted by the dark other world.

And now I have come back, come back like a dog to die. London is hideously empty; one day raucous sunlight, the next gibbering damp and cold. I walk every day in St. James's Park, walk as far as Carlton House Terrace, and let myself be overpowered by the outside grandeur of houses I know.

What did I expect? what miracle, what dropping of wealth from the clouds? My life has been full of such queer chance that I never dreamed that in my extremity Fate would fail me. Evidently the game is played; well, I shall do my part since there is nothing left but to die: I can at least die gaily. But after all life holds one with vicious strength, with unmatched fascination. I am young, I am strong, my blood beats joyously to the wind, the pleasure of flowers can even on a day like this flush my cheeks with the abandon of their perfume.

I lay down life full, complete, vital; it is no played-out fabric that I am tearing the soul out of; and I am sorry for my body more than anything else. I look on it almost as something apart from me; it can't share in the future forgetfulness of life, it must be destroyed out of beauty—the smooth white flesh, the leap of blood,

the soft hair and questioning eyes. It is such a soft, tender piece of flesh; I hate to think of it dead and perhaps carelessly touched. I am so sorry, so grieved that I have to treat it like this, and take away from it the mind's protection. But it is the "myself" I enjoy killing, the myself that stood back at critical moments, that chained my will, that forbade my complete freedom. It is the mind that gets eternity if there is any, but this inherited mass of murderous contradictions will be for ever dead. It is almost useless for an adventurous mind to drag some characters through existence; they will fail you at the last moment and say "no" when every dictate and planned necessity of your life demands an instant "yes."

They talk of the last moments of drowning men, when they review their whole life, but I have a multitude of last moments. I have set the day, the hour, and every

minute brings it inexorably nearer. I walk in the park and stir the dead leaves with my parasol, and to-day I went into a tea-room to hear the tinkle of voices and cups and the low clamour of the violins. Walking back across the park the sky was palely blue and touched here and there with stars, and against the luminous sky showed the tracery of the bare boughs. The sound of the city was subdued, the sheep on the grass were huddled and asleep—and in three days I shall be dead. I almost laughed at the thought, and gathered my skirts around me a little more closely so that I could hear the rustle of my silk petticoats. I opened the fur at my throat, I watched the pressure of my feet as I walked swiftly over the hard paths. I felt the litheness, the vigour of my body as I walked. I am young to die.

Sometimes I lean over to the fire and wonder just what has brought me to these

sad and tragic days. Yes, Rossetti, "what most or least impelled my onward way?" Ambition is a curse if you are not armour-proof against everything else, unless you are willing to sacrifice yourself to your ambition. And I have not been. I wanted the riches and the beauty of every moment, too. It never pays to give yourself where you want to go. A woman who is ambitious must get what she wants through disgust, not pleasure.

But am I so unhappy? Have I not lived? I have been loved, I have seen and heard many beautiful things, and—I, too, have loved in my own way.

I have no regrets. I have never harmed anyone—anything I have suffered has been my own folly or my own accepted risk.

But I protest against death because I see and enjoy and love the good of life so utterly, the delight of things that oth-

ers accept as usual or pass by unnoticed; the rapture of perfume, of dawns and twilights, the abandonment of music, the transformation of Art, the mere delight of being human and the gifts of the trained senses. I can feel the exquisiteness like that of a jewel or flower that is transfixed in a page of Flaubert or Gautier, or lean from a carriage touched to grief by the tenderness of the golden melting lights in the haze of a London evening before darkness has quite fallen.

And people live on in their dull health who have never read words as a sensuous act, who would call the transmission of a gas jet through fog into the tremor of excited nerves a result of bad digestion or of lunacy. And they who never see Da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks," who have never heard the intoxication of a symphony, will live on, dine on, continue to drink their champagne—and I must die.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

I have just been reading Flaubert's *Salâmmbo,* and it makes an explanation for me, it is a reason why I am counting now the hours till I shall be dead. These are the words and phrases and moods that created the world I fought to enter, to possess. The words tinkle over the pages and make a chain that is dragging me down to death.

Pomegranates, coral dust, vermilion, filigree, porphyry, a network of blue pearls, nard, flamingoes, ambergris, amber; exquisite words luminous with the radiance of unknown nights and days and unseen suns and undiscovered oceans. I wanted my world of ivory and green diamonds, of lotus-covered rivers, of alabaster terraces bordered by the pink blossoms of dwarf oleanders.

They have all seduced me, these sedulous phrases of unknown vistas, shadows of passion and visions of glamour.

Gautier, Flaubert, we cannot reproduce their world by anything but money. It is a physical world illuminated by the sun of the senses.

The soul was invented to satisfy the jealousy of those who haven't any money.

I have fathomed to-day the tremendous negative delight of pride. I had been out; the swirl of the autumn keen air streaked with sword-like sun, the smell of the leaves rustling through the air, the ocean of cool sky and sun-smitten clouds, the electricity of the riotous sense of cold, throbbed my blood to responsive flame. I couldn't die. I was so young, I enjoyed it so, and the world was so beautiful; anything, anyway, only let me live. So I wrote to Oscar. I knew of his self-satisfied smile, his complacent consciousness that he was my only resource, his smug feeling that I turned in my extremity to him. I braved all that

and wrote that I would stay, that I was willing to stay in London as he wished. Then when the letter was written I read it over with the blood slowly turning to fire in my cheeks. I stoop to beg to him! I ask my life of anyone! I yield an iota of what I wished to do! I looked out of the window. The wind was still whirling the leaves, but the light was turning grey; the exquisite chill was still there, but it was like the steel of a sword, not the iced fillip of wine. I went over to the glass: my eyes and face were flaming with shame; and I turned back and tore the letter into shreds. My pride was dearer than life; the pleasure of giving it my life intoxicated me. I am stronger after all than the disaster of being human.

THE END

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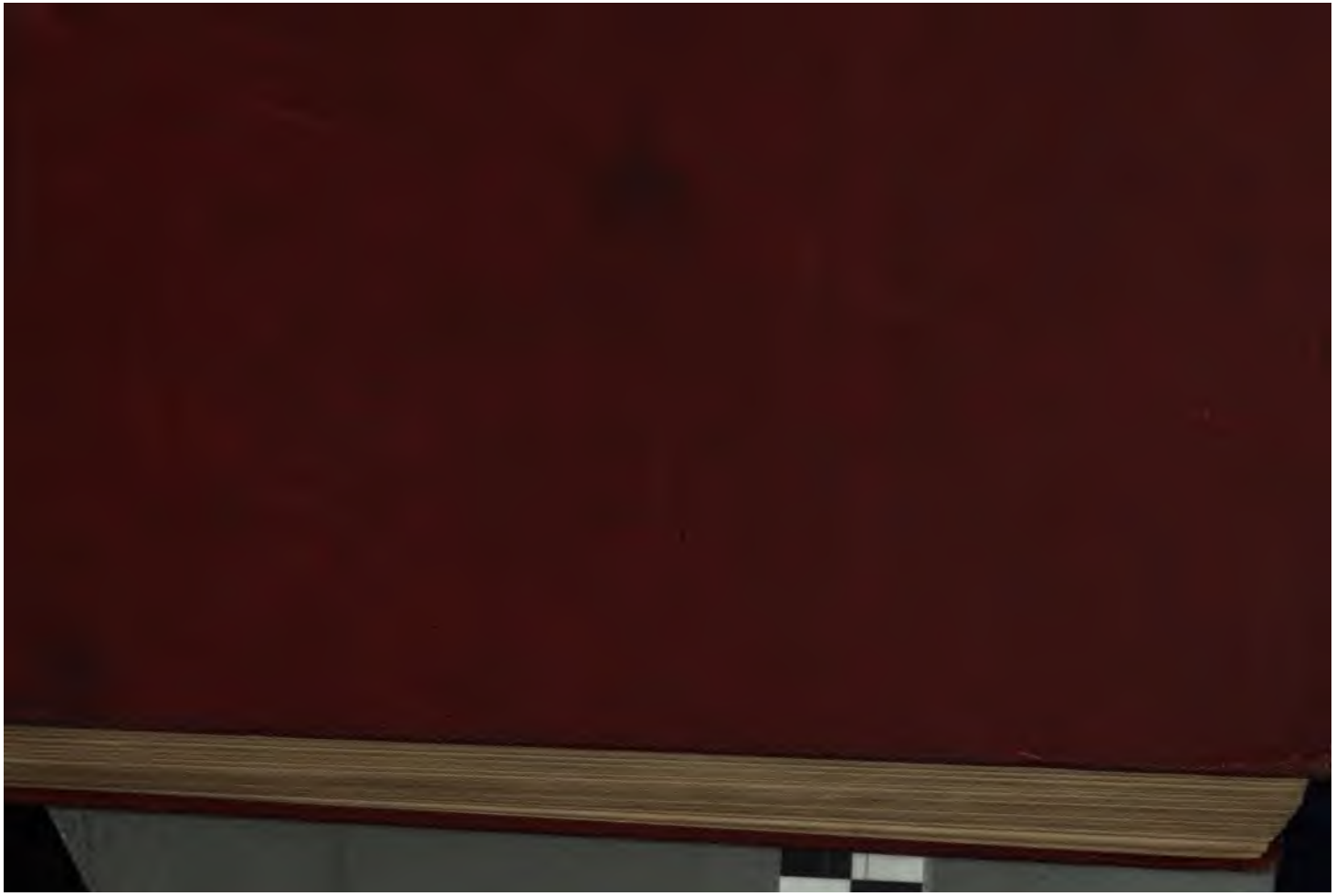
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